32 PAGES OF STORY
CROSSGEN COMICS
JULY 2001
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$4.70 CAN
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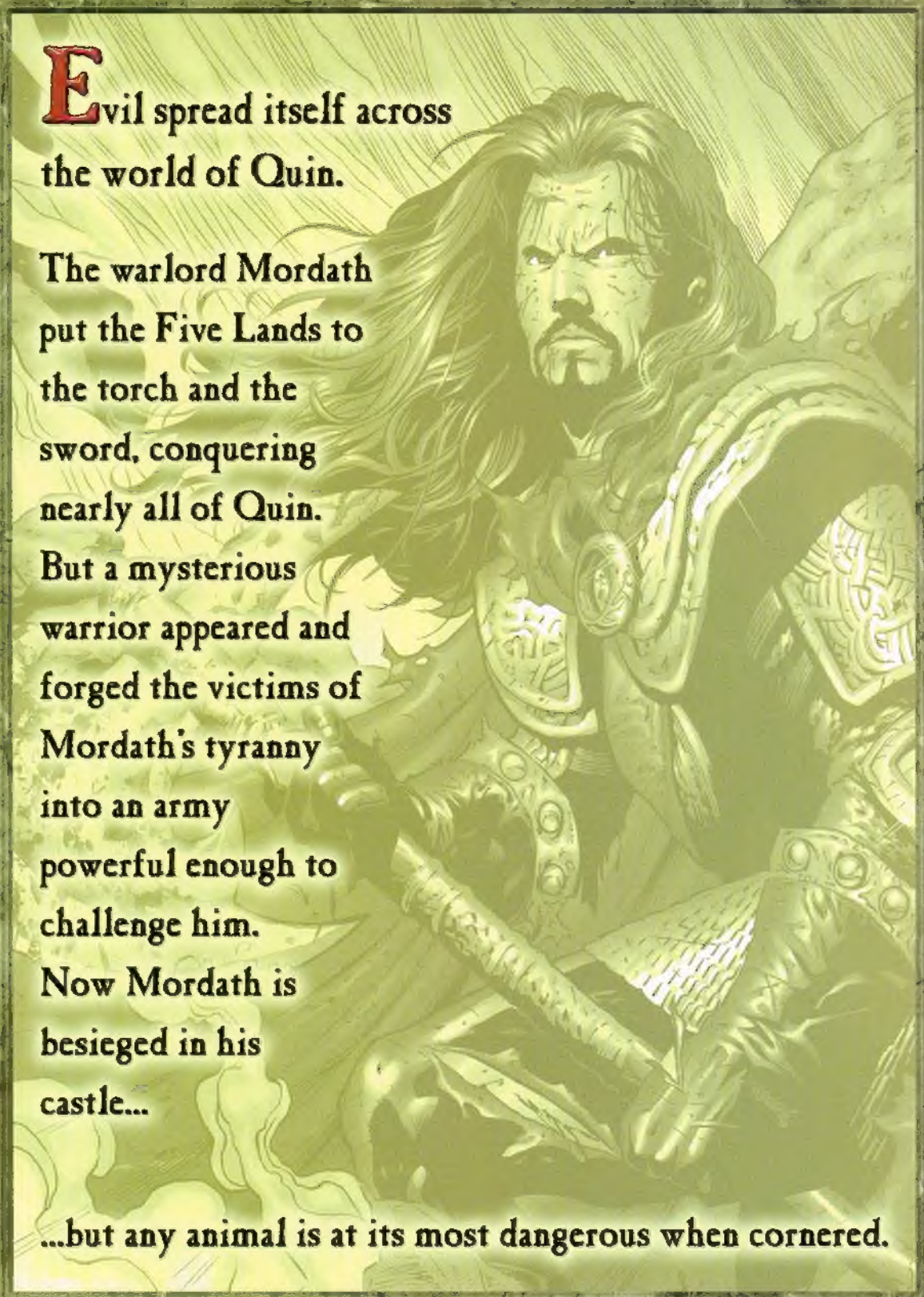
Sojourn
PREQUEL
LAND. GERACI CAESAR
Ron Marz • Greg Land • Drew Geraci • Caesar Rodriguez


Evil spread itself across the world of Quin.
The warlord Mordath put the Five Lands to the torch and the sword, conquering nearly all of Quin. But a mysterious warrior appeared and forged the victims of Mordath's tyranny into an army powerful enough to challenge him. Now Mordath is besieged in his castle...
...but any animal is at its most dangerous when cornered.

Sojourn™ Prequel Vol. 1, Issue 1, JULY 2001. FIRST PRINTING. Published by CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. Office of publication: 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar, Florida 34677. **CrossGen®, CrossGen Comics®, CrossGeneration®,** and **CrossGeneration Comics®** are registered trademarks of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. **Sojourn™, the CrossGen sigil™,** and all prominent characters are ™ and © 2001 CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. The entire contents of this book are ™ and © 2001 CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. The stories, incidents, and characters in this publication are fictional. Any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reproduced in any form without the express written consent of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. PRINTED IN CANADA.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I CAN *DO* TO YOU?

WE'VE BARELY BEGUN TO EXPLORE THE AGONIES I CAN INFLICT UPON YOU.

AND I HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD. WITH YOUR ARMIES SURROUNDING THIS FORTRESS I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

UNLESS YOU *TELL ME.*

TELL ME WHO THIS WARRIOR IS WHO PRESSES ME. HIS *NAME.*

WHERE DID HE COME FROM?

NOWHERE.

HE CAME FROM NOWHERE AND GATHERED US TO HIM. THEN CHASED YOU AND YOUR TROLLS BACK TO YOUR HOLE LIKE RATS.

I KEEP ASKING THE SAME QUESTIONS...

...I DON'T WANT TO HEAR THE SAME ANSWERS.

GAAAH!

WHO *IS* HE?!

WHO IS HE?

HE'S THE ONE WHO'S GOING TO DESTROY YOU.

I AM THE LORD MORDATH!
I HELD THE FIVE LANDS IN MY GRIP!
AAAGH!
YOU THINK YOU CAN DEFY ME?
YOU THINK SOME PHANTOM'S GOING TO DEFEAT ME?
DO YOU?
FYAA
AKK
STUBBORN.
TOO STUBBORN FOR HIS OWN GOOD.

A LOOSE TONGUE WOULD'VE SERVED HIM BETTER THAN A STRONG WILL.
WHAT OF THE SIEGE, MAHK? ANY CHANGE?
NO, LORD MORDATH.
OUR ENEMIES CONTINUE TO THROW THEMSELVES AT OUR WALLS. WE CONTINUE TO REPEL THEM.
FOR NOW.
HOW PITIFUL WE'VE BECOME.
ONCE THE FIVE LANDS SHOOK WITH OUR ADVANCES. NOW WE HIDE BEHIND WALLS.
COME ALONG. WE'LL SEE WHAT WE SEE.
WELL...

...THIS COULD BE BETTER.

HOW MANY?
FIFTEEN THOUSAND, LORD. MAYBE MORE. REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE BY THE HOUR.
THEY SMELL BLOOD.
I WOULD TOO.
SO CLOSE...
"...AND SO FAR BEYOND MY REACH. I NEARLY PUT ALL FIVE LANDS UNDER MY HEEL. SEPARATELY *NONE* OF THEM WAS MY EQUAL...
"...THEN *HE* APPEARED, AS IF HE'D STEPPED OUT OF MYTH...
"...AND FORGED THE RAGGED SURVIVORS INTO AN ARMY MY FORCES CANNOT STAND AGAINST. HE'S RUN ME TO GROUND LIKE A WOUNDED ANIMAL..."
...AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW HIS NAME.
HE'S OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, NOW THAT THE END IS CLOSE.
LOOKING STONE.

Oh YES, HE'S OUT THERE...
...BUT WHERE...
...WHERE...
Ah.
THERE.
DAMN HIM, WHO IS HE?
WHO BRINGS THIS ARMY AGAINST ME SO THAT I'M FORCED TO CRINGE IN MY CASTLE?
SKRAAK
KWOOM
GO FETCH MY BLADE.
THEY'LL BREACH US SOON...
...I WANT TO BE READY.

FORWARD!
THE CURS RUN BEFORE US!
HRAA
THE WALLS ARE OURS!
CHH
GLLG
A KING'S RANSOM TO THE MAN WHO TAKES MORDATH'S HEAD!
SPLAK

COME TO ME! ALL OF YOU!
THIS FORTRESS WILL NOT FALL WHILE I YET DRAW BREATH!
DRIVE BACK THOSE WHO WOULD BRING US TO -
AHHN!

YOUR ARMIES CAME TO OUR LANDS AND BUTCHERED MY PEOPLE OUT OF THEIR AERIES.
YOU HUNTED US FOR SPORT
MY PEOPLE HAVE A SAYING
GHK
AAAH!
SHUK!
VENGEANCE FLIES ON SWIFT WINGS!
HNNNN
EYAAGH!
I TOO HAVE A SAYING DEATH ISN'T FINICKY

BUT ITS APPETITE MUST ALWAYS BE SATED
HOW MANY, MORDATH?
HOW MANY OF US DO YOU THINK YOU CAN KILL BEFORE ONE OF US TAKES YOUR HEAD?
DON'T BOTHER REACHING FOR YOUR BLADE YOU'LL BE DEAD BEFORE YOU EVER LAY HANDS ON—
HHK!
FORGIVE ME FOR ALLOWING HIM TO GET SO NEAR, LORD
ARE YOU WELL?
I LIVE, MAHK
FOR NOW
THE BATTLE?
POOR.
THEY BREAK OUR LINES, SPILL OVER OUR WALLS. WE FIGHT VALIANTLY...

"...BUT THEIR NUMBERS ARE OVERWHELMING."

THE TIME TO END THIS DRAWS NIGH

HRG!

EEYAH!

GHRK!

DO YOU REMEMBER, MAHK? THIS IS HOW MY CONQUESTS *BEGAN*, IN SMOKE AND BLOOD.
SMOKE AND BLOOD
AS LONG AS THEY'VE YET TO TOPPLE THE WALLS PERHAPS THE DAY CAN STILL BE SAVED.
GIVE THE ORDER TO ABANDON THE SKIRMISH LINES AND EXTERIOR DEFENSES. WE'LL PULL BACK WITHIN THE CENTRAL FORTRESS AND MAKE THEM COME IN AFTER—
DO YOU
FEEL
SOMETHING?

SHRABOOOOOM
RRRRUMMMMMMMBLLLL
WHNF?!

SPKK
NNFF!
NHH
HHH
HHH
HHH
HHH

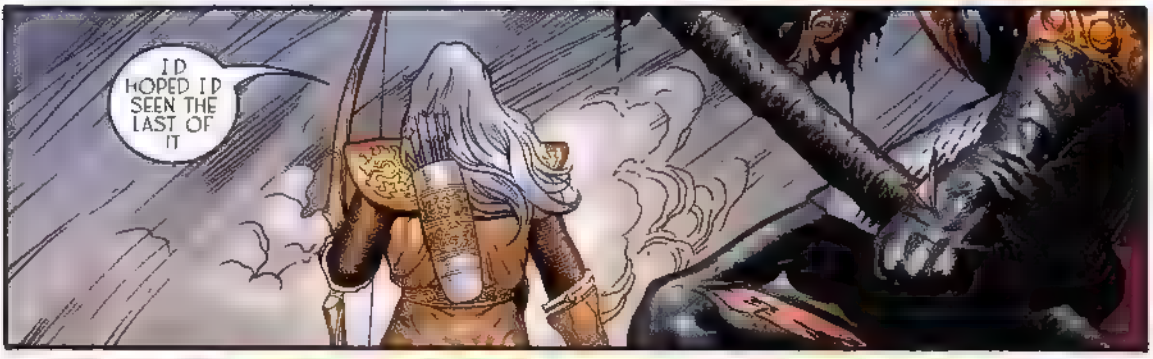
I STILL STAND.
AND WHILE I STAND THE DAY IS NOT YET YOURS
FACE ME
SHOW YOURSELF!
GH!
URK!

MORDATH
I CALL MYSELF AYDEN

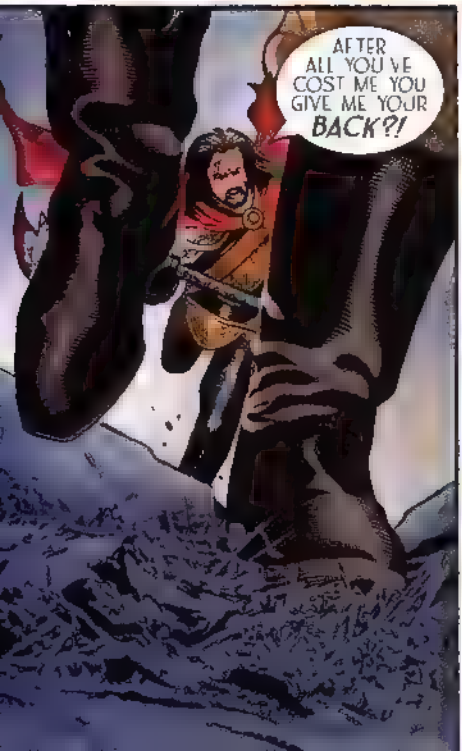
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S DONE THIS TO ME?
IF YOU ASK WHETHER I AM HE WHO HAS HELPED BRING ABOUT YOUR DEFEAT
YES
SO THE MYSTERY IS JUST A MAN AFTER ALL SOMEHOW I EXPECTED SOMEONE MORE
REGAL
YOU COUNT YOUR VICTORY PREMATURELY ARE YOU WILLING TO COME TAKE IT PERSONALLY?
SLAY HIM, LORD!
LET US CUT DOWN MORDATH!
HOLD
ENOUGH BLOOD'S BEEN SPILLED

ONCE YOU CAST A SHADOW ACROSS NEARLY ALL OF THE FIVE LANDS
THAT IS NOW AT AN END
IT'S AS IF YOU DID NOT *EXIST* BEFORE YOU MOVED AGAINST ME WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?
I CAME TO THIS PLACE TO *REMOVE* MYSELF FROM STRIFE. TO BE AT *PEACE* I HAD NO DESIRE TO INVOLVE MYSELF IN THIS CONFLICT.
..BUT *YOU* LEFT ME NO CHOICE YOU FORCED ME TO DO THAT WHICH I FIND MOST REPUGNANT
CHOOSE SIDES.
MY ARMY IS VICTORIOUS
WHILE YOURS IS NO MORE
CONCLUDE THIS WHILE YOU YET LIVE

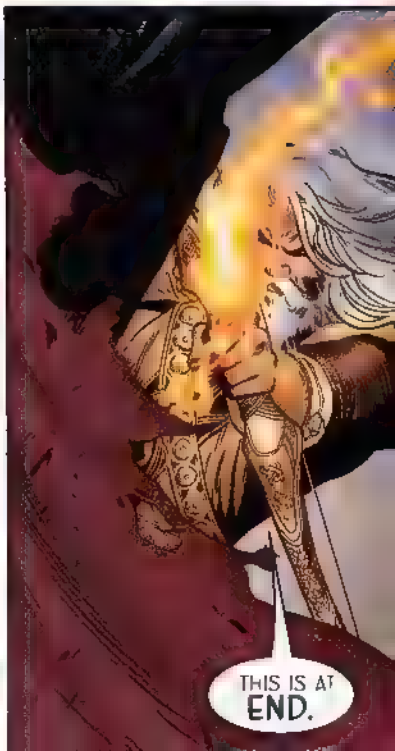
SURRENDER?
I'VE NEVER DONE SO I'M NOT ABOUT TO DO SO NOW
UNFORTUNATE
BUT NOT UNEXPECTED
I'VE SEEN DEATH AND DESTRUCTION ON GRAND SCALES


I'D HOPED I'D SEEN THE LAST OF IT

YOU DARE GIVE ME YOUR BACK?


AFTER ALL YOU'VE COST ME YOU GIVE ME YOUR BACK?!

RRM
I TOLD YOU


THIS IS AT END.

EVAGH!

WHO
WHO ARE YOU?
TELL ME THAT MUCH
A KING WHO WISHES TO BE KING NO LONGER
THEN HEAR ME
KING NO LONGER
WITH MY LAST BREATH I SWEAR VENGEANCE UPON YOU UPON YOU AND THE FIVE LANDSSSS

MORDATH IS NO MORE
FREEDOM FOR THE FIVE LANDS!
HAIL, AYDEN!
AYE!
WE CAN NEVER REPAY THE DEBT WE OWE YOU
YOU SNUFFED OUT MORDATH'S EVIL SO THAT THE FIVE LANDS
AND ALL ITS PEOPLES
MIGHT BE FREE AGAIN AND ALL THE WHILE YOU REMAINED A MYSTERY TO US, AYDEN
LET US KNOW YOU BETTER
YOU LED US TO VICTORY IN WAR
NOW LEAD US IN PEACE
BE SOVEREIGN OVER ALL FIVE LANDS
WE NEED YOU
SO THAT THIS CAN NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN

YOU HONOR ME.
YET I MUST DECLINE
I HAVE LED BEFORE. MY REIGN SPAWNED DIVISION AND DESTRUCTION
I HAVE SEEN THOSE I CONSIDERED MY CHILDREN TEAR AT ONE ANOTHER'S THROATS LIKE ANIMALS.
I NO LONGER WISH TO BE INVOLVED IN SUCH CONFLICTS
THERE'S MUCH TO BE DONE
REBUILDING.
RECOVERY
THE HEALING OF WOUNDS.
THESE THINGS YOU MUST DO FOR YOURSELF
YOU MUST STAND ON YOUR OWN, WITHOUT THE INTERVENTION OF ONE WHO HAS FAILED AT THE ROLE OF MONARCH
BUT I WOULD NOT ABANDON YOU IF YOUR NEED IS GREAT.
I CAN BE SUMMONED
THIS BROUGHT DEATH TO MORDATH
LET IT BE BROKEN INTO FIVE FRAGMENTS

AND THE FIVE FRAGMENTS *SCATTERED* TO THE FIVE LANDS
THESE SHALL BE YOUR TOOLS TO ROUSE ME
THEY ARE AS THE FIVE LANDS THEMSELVES.
"SEPARATELY THEY ARE MERE PIECES.
" BUT JOINED IN A SINGLE PURPOSE
THEY CAN ACCOMPLISH *MUCH.*"
IF A THREAT DIRE ENOUGH TO *UNITE* THE FIVE LANDS ARISES

I WILL RETURN TO YOU
I CAME TO YOUR AID BECAUSE I COULD NOT DO OTHERWISE
BUT I HAVE NO DESIRE TO BECOME FURTHER EMBROILED IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN
SO I MUST BID YOU FAREWELL
THEN LEAVE WITH OUR THANKS, LORD
SHOULD YOU EVER THINK TO RECONSIDER, WE ARE YOUR SERVANTS.
WAIT AYDEN
WHO ARE YOU? TRULY?
IN TRUTH I'VE BEEN MANY THINGS.

BUT NOW I SIMPLY WANT TO BE ALONE

AT THE RISK OF REPEATING MYSELF
...I AGAIN HAVE TO ADVISE AGAINST THIS THING YOU INTEND
STRONGLY
WHY?
WEREN'T MY PREVIOUS CHOICES SUCCESSFUL? THEY'VE ALL FOMENTED THE CONFLICT WE INTENDED TO REIGNITE
WHAT MAKES YOU BELIEVE *THIS ONE* WOULD BE ANY DIFFERENT?
BUT PREVIOUS SIGIL BEARERS WERE
WITH THE PREVIOUS SIGIL-BEARERS YOU AT LEAST ACCEPTED MY INPUT
THIS TIME YOU SEEM DETERMINED TO IGNORE MY ADVICE
WHAT YOU PROPOSE COULD HAVE DIRE CONSEQUENCES. MORDATH WAS A SOURCE OF GREAT EVIL BEFORE
DO YOU THINK BEING *DEAD* FOR THREE CENTURIES WILL HAVE IMPROVED HIS MOOD?

HE COULD BECOME A DIFFICULTY IN THE GREATER SCHEME
RECONSIDER
PLEASE
MORDATH THREW THIS WORLD INTO CONFLICT WHEN HE LIVED
HE'LL DO THE SAME WHEN HE'S BROUGHT BACK

Welcome

to the world of Sojourn.

Here is a special sneak preview of the first eight pages — without dialogue — of SOJOURN #1 which hits the stands in a month. Following that is a brief sketchbook of prominent characters in the ongoing series. Set some 300 years after the battle you've just witnessed, it presents a world dominated by a Mordath risen from his tomb and granted the power of a sigil.

Of course every villain needs a hero; ours is Arwyn, a woman who loses everything she holds dear to Mordath's tyranny. She swears vengeance, but her only hope of destroying the undead Mordath is to undertake a quest to reunite the Five Fragments of Ayden's arrow and summon him back to Quin.

We intend to make SOJOURN "epic" in every sense of the word as Arwyn's quest visits the far corners of her world. Greg Land is turning out the best artwork of his career, aided and abetted by his longtime inker Drew Geraci and colorist Caesar Rodriguez, lately of SCION.

A lot of what SOJOURN is, or at least what we hope it's going to be, is inspired by some of the stories I read as a kid: "The Lord of the Rings," "The Sword of Shannara," even something called "Urshurak" by the Brothers Hildebrandt (anybody remember that one?). And it all still fits within the boundaries of the CrossGen Universe.

We think we're going to bring you something special every month. Why don't you come back and see if we're right.

Ron Marz
Writer, SOJOURN

This was before I met her, of course.
But eventually she told me how it all began.
BLOOD FOR MORDATH!

PLEASE..
HRLG!
AHHH!
GHRRG
NHH
NHH
EVERYTHING'S ALL RIGHT I WON'T LET THEM HURT YOU

MY NAME'S ARWYN.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
I'M...
MY NAME IS BRIA
BRIA, THEN
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
A LITTLE SCARED, BUT
I'M ALL RIGHT
IS HE YOURS? WHAT'S HIS NAME?
THAT'S KREEG. I'VE HAD HIM SINCE HE WAS A PUPPY
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IS THERE SOMEONE WHO'S SUPPOSED TO BE TAKING CARE OF YOU? YOUR PARENTS?

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AND THAT'S WHEN THE *TROLLS* FOUND US. THEY FOUND US AND THEN THEY
THEY *HURT* MY MOMMY
BUT *I* GOT AWAY
BRIA!
DADDY!
BRIA, THANK AYDEN YOU'RE *ALIVE!*
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D *SEE* YOU AGAIN!
WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOTHER IS MOMMY *WITH* YOU?
NO, DADDY
MOMMY'S GONE
Shh, SWEETIE. IT'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.
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..BUT THE LADY SAVED ME THE LADY AND HER DOGGIE *HIS* NAME IS KREEG

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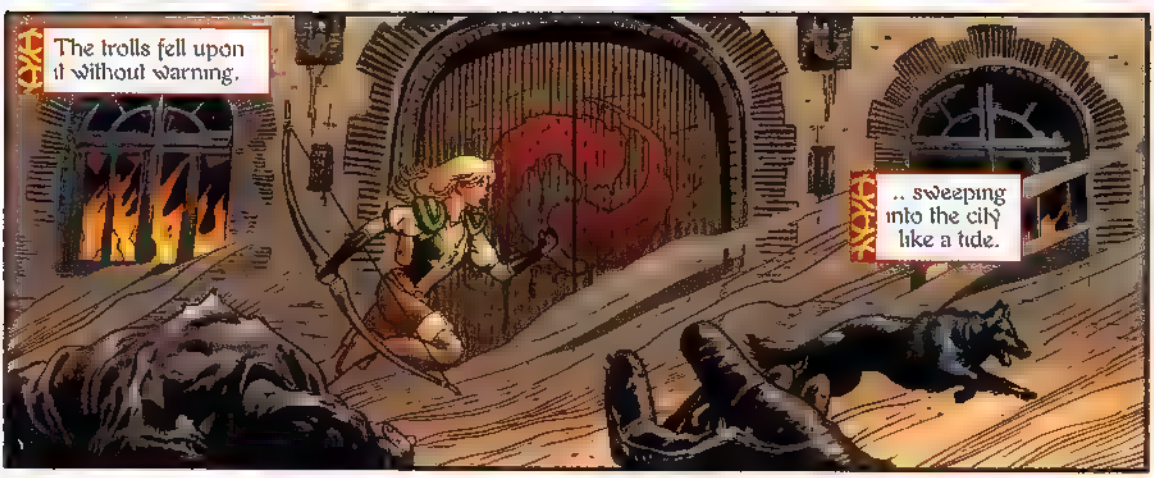
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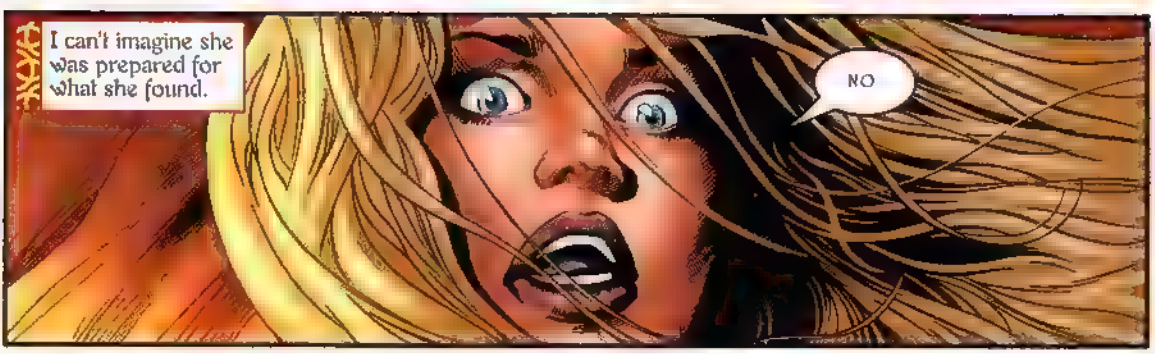
I can't imagine she was prepared for what she found.
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...when there was still room for joy in her life
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When she wasn't the person all this has made her.

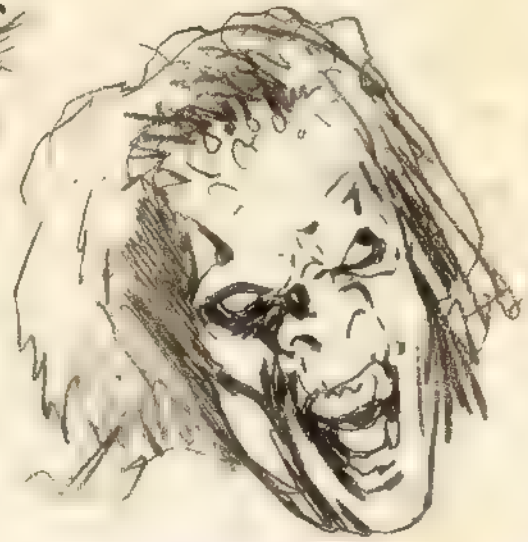
SKETCHBOOK

Kreeg

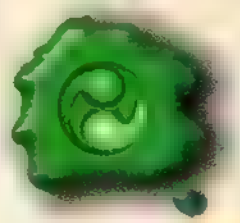
Ayden

Gareth

Arwyn



Mordath



SOJOURN character designs by Greg Land

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Sojourn™
Ron Marz
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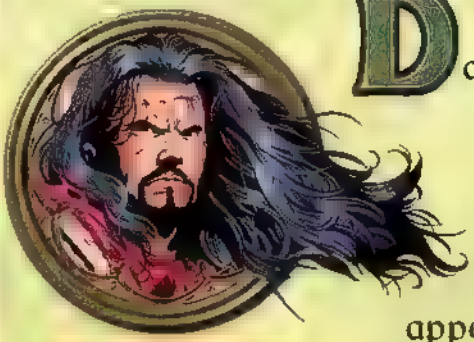
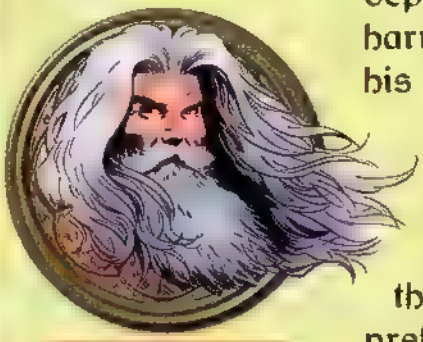
Caesar Rodriguez
LAND · GERACI
CÆSAR

Our Story So Far...



Mordath

Darkness spread across the Five Lands as the dread warlord Mordath placed almost all of Quin under his booted heel. Just as all hope was nearly extinguished, a glimmer of light appeared. As if stepping from legend itself, a warrior calling himself Ayden gathered the survivors of Mordath's depredations and forged an army that harried Mordath's troll forces back to his fortress.



Ayden

During the final attack, Ayden slew Mordath, piercing him with an arrow. Offered sovereignty over the Five Lands, Ayden declined, preferring to retreat to the solitude from which he'd come. However, before departing Ayden broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to the Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

That was three hundred years ago.

Arwyn

Now Mordath has risen from the grave and once again stands on the brink of conquering all that lies before him.

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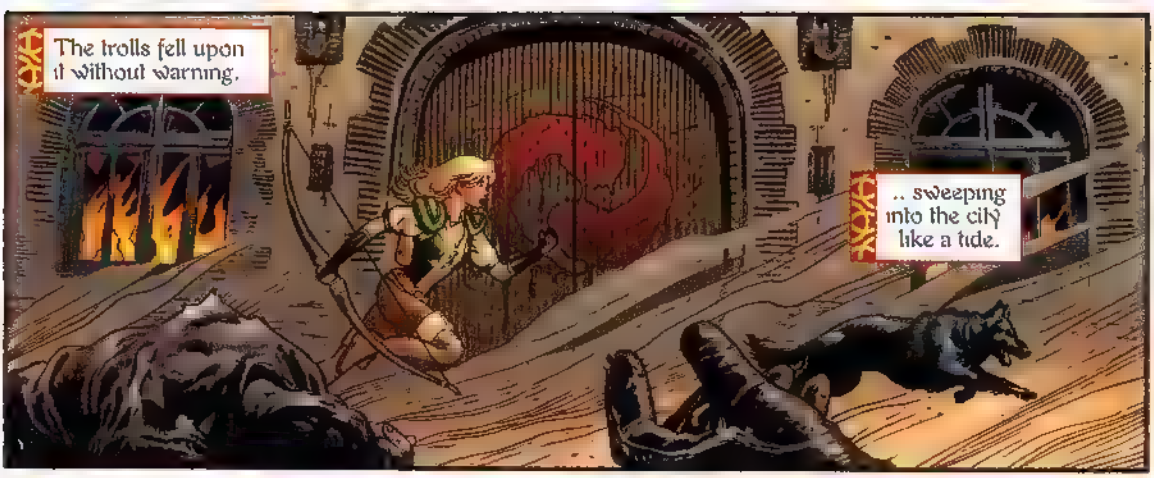
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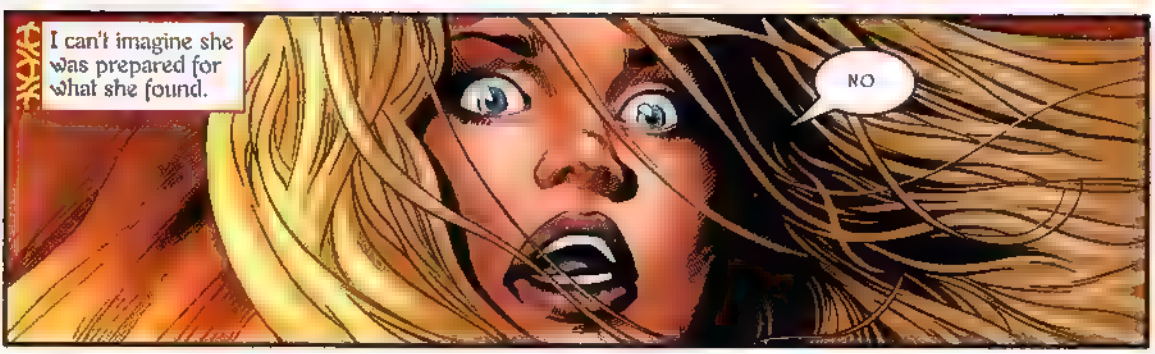
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...when there was still room for joy in her life
NEERA
When she wasn't the person all this has made her.

It's hard for me not to see the fleeting nature of things now
KRUNK!
NEERA!
DARIAN!
We build our lives around ourselves like a careful fortress. And each morning when we open our eyes we arrogantly expect what we've built to be there for us.
But we never dare to think that each morning could be the last time our lives make sense.
We never think about how quickly everything can be taken away.
NNAA

GHHH!
AS OUR LORD MORDATH COMMANDS.
..NO SURVIVORS
MNNEE
GRRARR
HKK!
I suppose what she did seems like an act fueled by an overwhelming will to survive.

But that's not it at all
THUK
GLAHH!
CHWUNK
Surviving was simply a byproduct
KK

She hardly remembers any of it...
AHN!
..at least that's what she's told me
UFF!
To her it's a disjointed series of images, lit by fire..
. and stained with blood.
I don't think saving herself ever occurred to her in any conscious way The only thought in her mind...

was vengeance.
GRRK!
CHOK
SHE'S ONE HUMAN FEMALE!
GUT HER!
RRRR
CHANG
RRARGH

GLRG!
UKK!
GHHG

What I've learned about vengeance, though...
...is that it's ultimately hollow.
No matter how many corpses you pile up, there are never enough to fill the void left by tragedy
Vengeance doesn't heal wounds
I'm still not sure she realizes that
Oh DARIAN
MY POOR, BEAUTIFUL HUSBAND
YOU TRIED, DIDN'T YOU?
TRIED TO PROTECT HER FROM THEM

NEERA
oh
AAAAAAAA

I've never had what she had. So I've never lost what she had.
I can't say I truly know her, because she guards so much of herself. She keeps the world at arm's length.
But I think in some small way I've come to understand her. When everything you love is taken away from you .
..all that's left is hate
And hate is at least something to hold on to when your whole life disappears...

. like smoke into the air.

MORDATH
I M GOING TO KILL MORDATH

LORD?
LORD MORDATH?
NEWS FROM GERRINDOR, MASTER.
THE CITY HAS FALLEN AS YOU COMMANDED, IT HAS BEEN PUT TO THE TORCH TO SERVE AS AN EXAMPLE OF RESISTING YOUR WILL
YOUR LAST OPPOSITION IS CRUSHED.
ULTIMATE VICTORY BELONGS TO YOU.
FINALLY
AFTER THREE CENTURIES

THE FIVE LANDS ARE *MINE*

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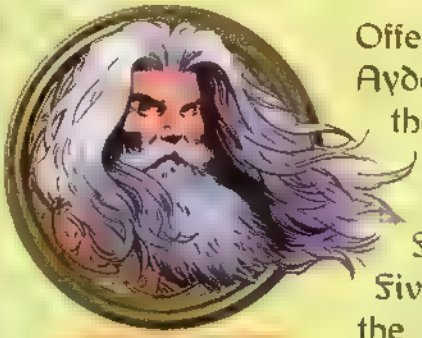
Our Story So Far...

Mordath

Darkness spread across the Five Lands as the dread warlord Mordath placed nearly all of Quin under his booted heel. Just as hope was nearly extinguished, a warrior calling himself Ayden gathered the survivors of Mordath's depredations and forged an army that defeated Mordath's troll forces. Ayden slew Mordath, piercing him with an arrow.



Ayden

Offered sovereignty over the Five Lands, Ayden declined, preferring to retreat to the solitude from which he'd come. However, before departing, Ayden broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to the Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Arwyn

That was three hundred years ago. Now Mordath has risen from the grave and conquered all that lies before him. The last city to fall before his armies was Gerrindor. The city itself was burned to the ground, its inhabitants put to the sword. One woman survived, and swore vengeance for the deaths of her husband and daughter.

Her name is Arwyn.

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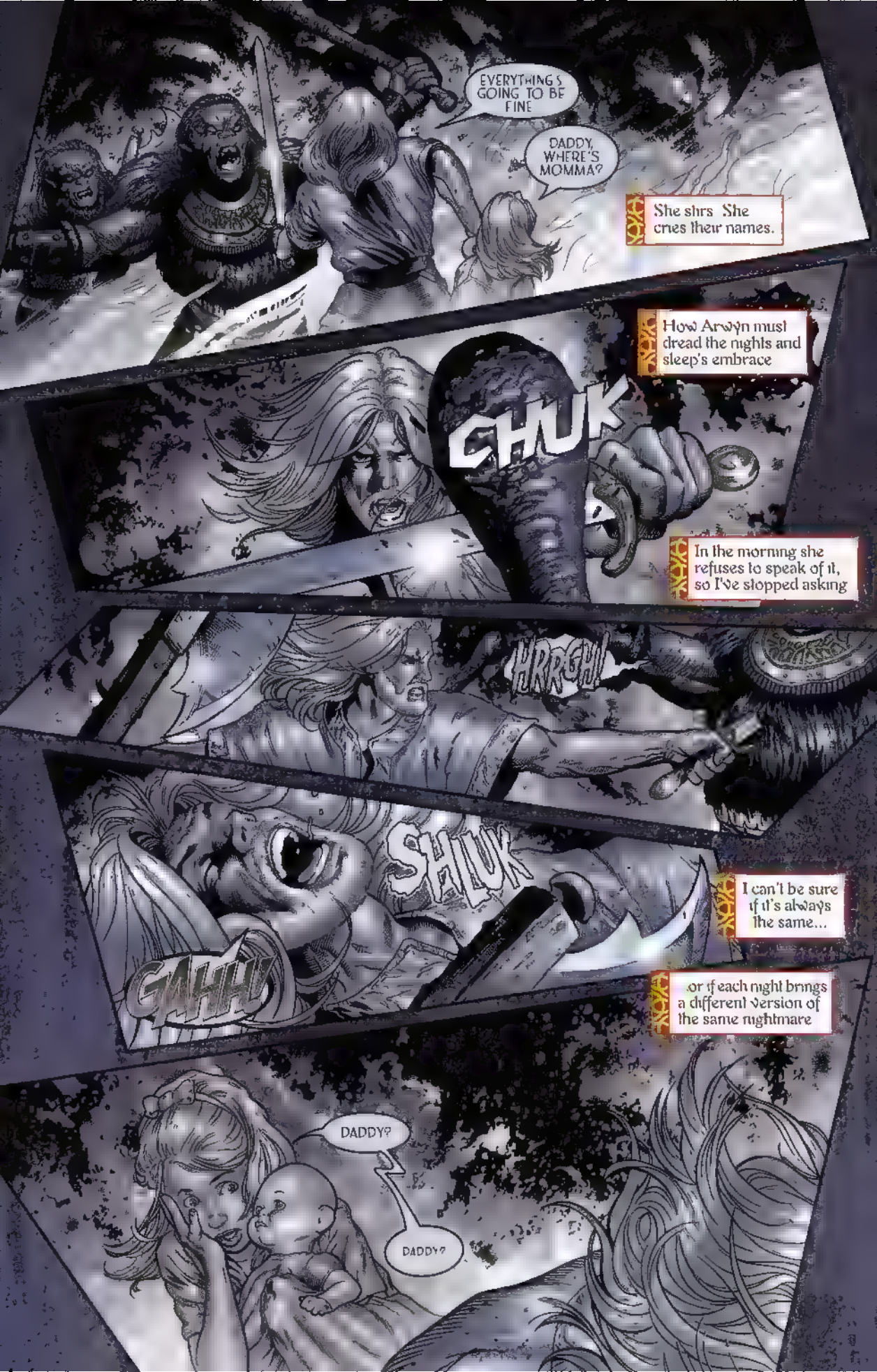
I've watched her sleeping
It's never peaceful Never restful.
STAY BEHIND ME, NEERA


EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE FINE
DADDY, WHERE'S MOMMA?
She shrs She cries their names.
How Arwyn must dread the nights and sleep's embrace
CHUK
In the morning she refuses to speak of it, so I've stopped asking
HRRGH!
SHLUK
GAHH!
I can't be sure if it's always the same...
or if each night brings a different version of the same nightmare
DADDY?
DADDY?

But I know it must end
the same way every time
MOMMA

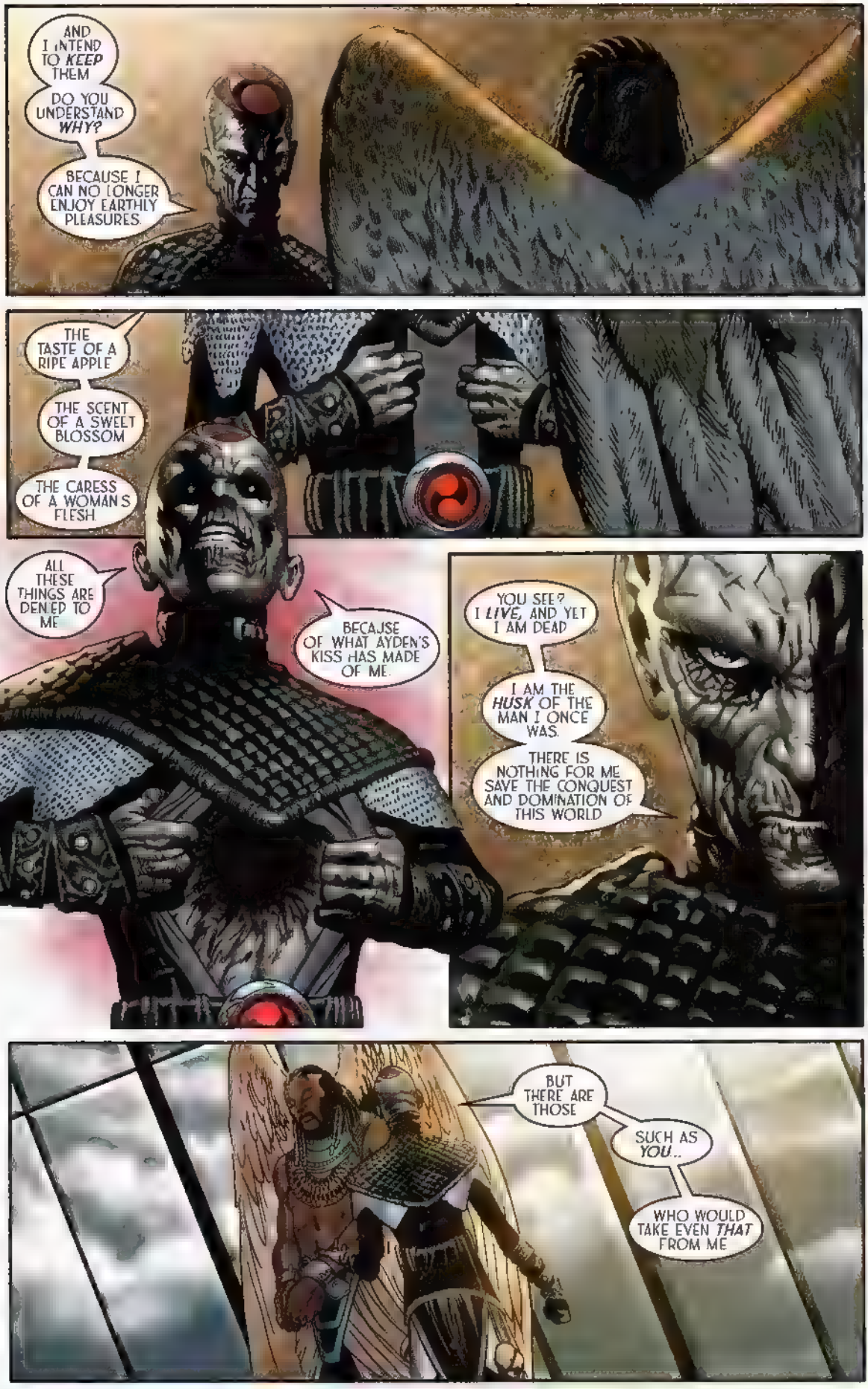
NNH
NEERA
HWEF?
NO, KREEG. IT'S OKAY. I WAS JUST
I THINK I'VE RESTED LONG ENOUGH
COME ON

LET'S GO KILL MORDATH

LORD MORDATH...
...YOU WISHED TO BE ADVISED IMMEDIATELY UPON THE PRISONER'S ARRIVAL.
THE FAMED HANUN OF ANKHARA
SUCH A PLEASURE TO FINALLY MEET YOU.
WELCOME TO MY PALACE

I TRUST YOU'LL ENJOY YOUR STAY
KNEEL BEFORE MORDATH!
AHG!
YOU FLATTER ME
I WOULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED SUCH OBEISANCE FROM SOMEONE WHO'S LED A REBELLION AGAINST MY RULE
YOU AND YOUR FOLLOWERS COST ME A GOOD MANY TROOPS WITH THIS FUTILE SHOW OF DEFIANCE
YOUR CAPTURE PRESENTED GREAT DIFFICULTIES, HIDDEN AMONG YOUR AERIES AS YOU WERE BUT, AS YOU'VE NO DOUBT COME TO REALIZE
. I CAN BE MOST TENACIOUS.

BRING HIM
MOVE!
HALK, HOW MUCH OF QUIN IS MINE?
ALL OF IT, MY LORD.
YES
ALL OF IT
ICY SKARNHIME
THE DESERT WASTES OF OUDUBAI
YOUR OWN CLIFFS OF ANKHARA
BLACK GRINBOR OF THE TROLLS
AND THE SWEETEST PRIZE, MIDDELYN
THREE CENTURIES AGO I SET ABOUT CONQUERING THE FIVE LANDS. I FAILED
BUT I HAVE BEEN REBORN, AND FINALLY I HAVE SUCCEEDED IN MY GOAL. THE FIVE LANDS ARE MINE


AND I INTEND TO *KEEP* THEM
DO YOU UNDERSTAND *WHY?*
BECAUSE I CAN NO LONGER ENJOY EARTHLY PLEASURES
THE TASTE OF A RIPE APPLE
THE SCENT OF A SWEET BLOSSOM
THE CARESS OF A WOMAN'S FLESH
ALL THESE THINGS ARE DENIED TO ME
BECAUSE OF WHAT AYDEN'S KISS HAS MADE OF ME
YOU SEE? I *LIVE*, AND YET I AM DEAD
I AM THE *HUSK* OF THE MAN I ONCE WAS.
THERE IS NOTHING FOR ME SAVE THE CONQUEST AND DOMINATION OF THIS WORLD
BUT THERE ARE THOSE
SUCH AS *YOU*..
WHO WOULD TAKE EVEN *THAT* FROM ME

MNF
I'M SURE YOU UNDERSTAND WHY I CAN'T ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN
NNNN!
EVEN DEATH ITSELF COULDN'T PREVENT ME FROM DELIVERING MY RETRIBUTION TO THE FIVE LANDS
NNNH!
AND NOTHING.
.NOTHING. .
WILL INTERFERE WITH MY ABSOLUTE GRIP UPON THIS WORLD

EYAAAAH!
FIND THE BODY I WANT IT HUNG FROM THE GATES.
AS A REMINDER OF THE WAGES OF DEFIANCE

WHAT'S THAT ABOUT?
THIS IS AS FAR AS YOU GO, KREEG. I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING AND I WON'T BE
I DON'T KNOW WHEN I'LL BE BACK YOU CAN'T COME
SO YOU TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, BOY
I LOVE YOU
WFF
KREEG, NO.
YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW
STAY, KREEG

ALL RIGHT
I SUPPOSE IT'S ONLY FITTING THIS WAY
BUT YOU HAVE TO STAY QUIET UNDERSTAND?
QUIET
YOU ALWAYS WERE TOO SMART FOR YOUR OWN GOOD
LET'S GO
GOOD

There are those who choose to believe Mordath is not truly Mordath
not the same man who united the troll clans and nearly conquered Quin more than three centuries ago
Rather than accept he s risen from his tomb, they prefer to convince themselves the pale despot is some other...
someone simply using Mordath's legend
GRK
THUK
I know differently, of course I've seen him with my own eyes.
But it doesn't matter what you believe The reality is the same either way
Mordath's rule is absolute

He keeps the Five Lands under his heel through the might of his troll armies. .
...and the might he himself wields
LOOK THERE .
.. IS THAT GARM RETURNING?
The mark Mordath bears on his pate, the same symbol he's taken for his crest, somehow allows him to create fire and command it as if it were a living thing.
Heh.
RETURNING WITH *DINNER* ON A LEASH.
It sounds fanciful, just another tale to make Mordath more monster than man. But I've witnessed it first hand.
It's nothing I care to see again.
YOU WOULDN T FORGET YOUR FRIENDS, WOULD YOU, GARM? YOU'RE GOING TO SHARE?
GARM?
WHY DON T YOU SPEAK?

Mordath is the most powerful being on all of Qum
Powerful enough that only the mad would think themselves capable of destroying him.
GHLK!
HRR!
Of course, only the mad would seek to accomplish the deed
DINNER
..by stealing into his fortress
Alone

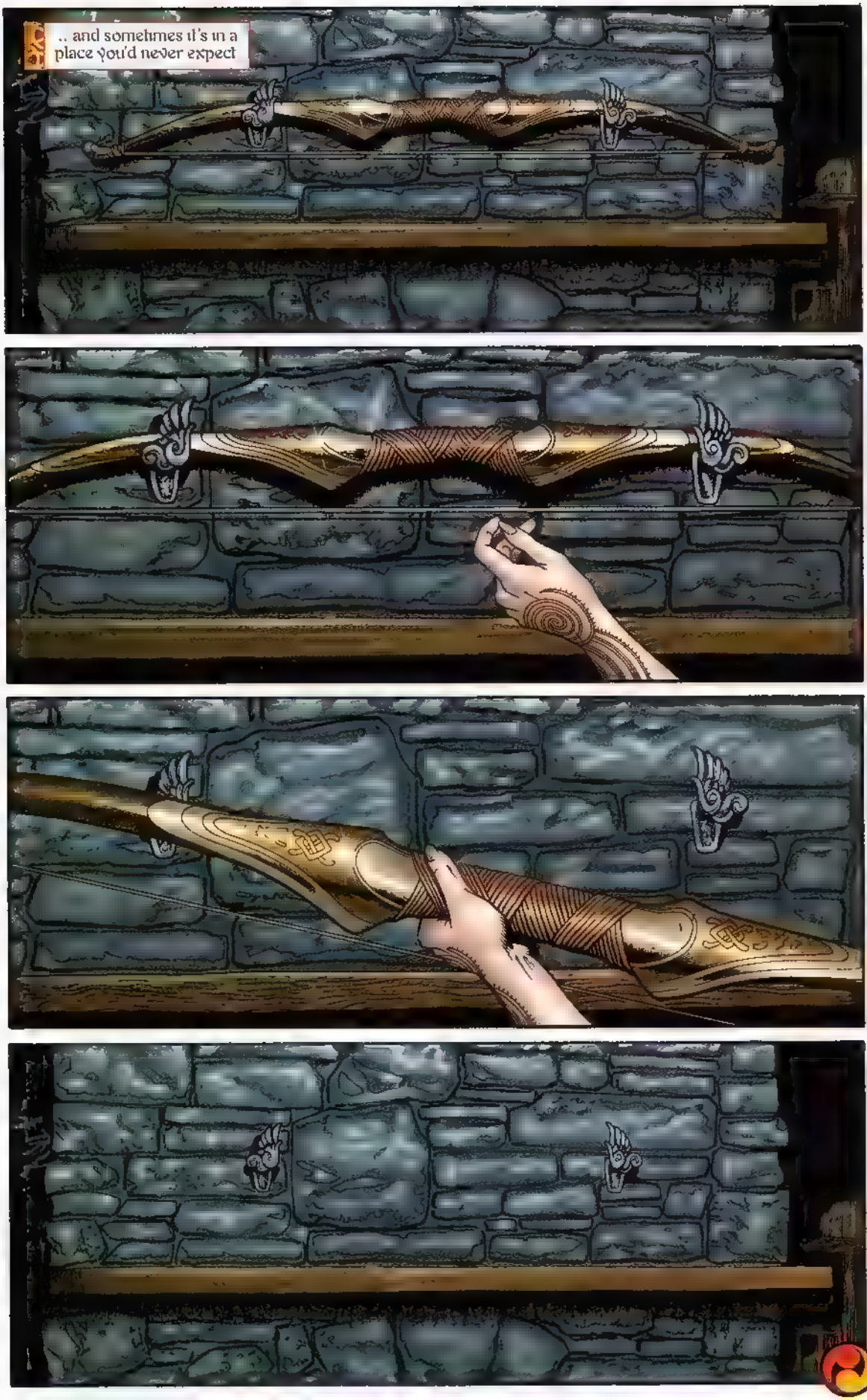
My own visits to Mordath's fortress have never been undertaken willingly
It's a vast edifice, as much a symbol of evil as the blood-red banners his troops carry into battle
It rests upon the same plain in Middelyn once occupied by Mordath's original castle
That one was torn down piece by piece following his death, the stones cast into the sea
Upon his return Mordath had it rebuilt, and topped by a tower burning with a great flame fueled by his fiery power.
The beacon can be seen from great distances, a constant reminder of Mordath's rule.
WHO ARE—

HK
THUK
How could you enter such a labyrinth
.a place you've never set foot before. .
...a place filled with a thousand enemies...
.and expect to come upon the object of your search?
I don't know. Maybe they do share some kind of connection.
ANKHARA
I WAN
ALL OF HANUN'S
FOLLOWERS
FOUND

AND I WANT THEM EXECUTED. I WANT THEIR WINGS AS TROPHIES.
THE ANKHARANS WILL BE COWERING IN THEIR AERIES FOR QUITE SOME TIME. THEN WE TURN OUR ATTENTION TO SKARNHIME.
YOUR WILL BE DONE, LORD.
I want to know how Mordath came to be as he is.
I don't mean how he came to live again. I mean how does a man become such a vessel of evil.
Perhaps it's because of his resurrection.
Perhaps whatever humanity he once had was left behind in his tomb...
and now he's become something more than human...
...and something far less.

It's said he can't die.
His trolls believe it, certainly.
They believe that having slipped death's embrace once, Mordath can never be reclaimed by it
I tend to take the opposing view. He was killed once. Why not again?
But then I've always been an optimist
NO
KILL HER

WHOEVER SHE IS
It was a doomed errand from the start, obviously.
AHH!
GRRR
But if she hadn't undertaken it, I never would have met her. I likely wouldn't be alive.
UHN!
Every quest must begin somewhere.
Sometimes it's in failure..


.. and sometimes it's in a place you'd never expect

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Mordath

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Offered sovereignty over the world of Quin, Ayden declined, preferring to retreat to the solitude from which he'd come. However, before departing, Ayden broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Ayden

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb. Aided by a sigil that allows him to create and command fire, Mordath has conquered all that lies before him. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter, however, did not.

Arwyn

Arwyn swore vengeance and stole into Mordath's fortress. But Mordath casually thwarted Arwyn's attempt on his life and ordered her death...

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She's a beautiful woman. Stunningly so
HELLO?
And yet she acts as if the thought never crosses her mind, as if she's not even aware of it
HELLO, CAN YOU HEAR ME?
Or maybe it's just that she doesn't care.
NNNH
...HNN?!
NO, NO, LOOK THIS WAY
But it's impossible not to see it

. . even with one eye.

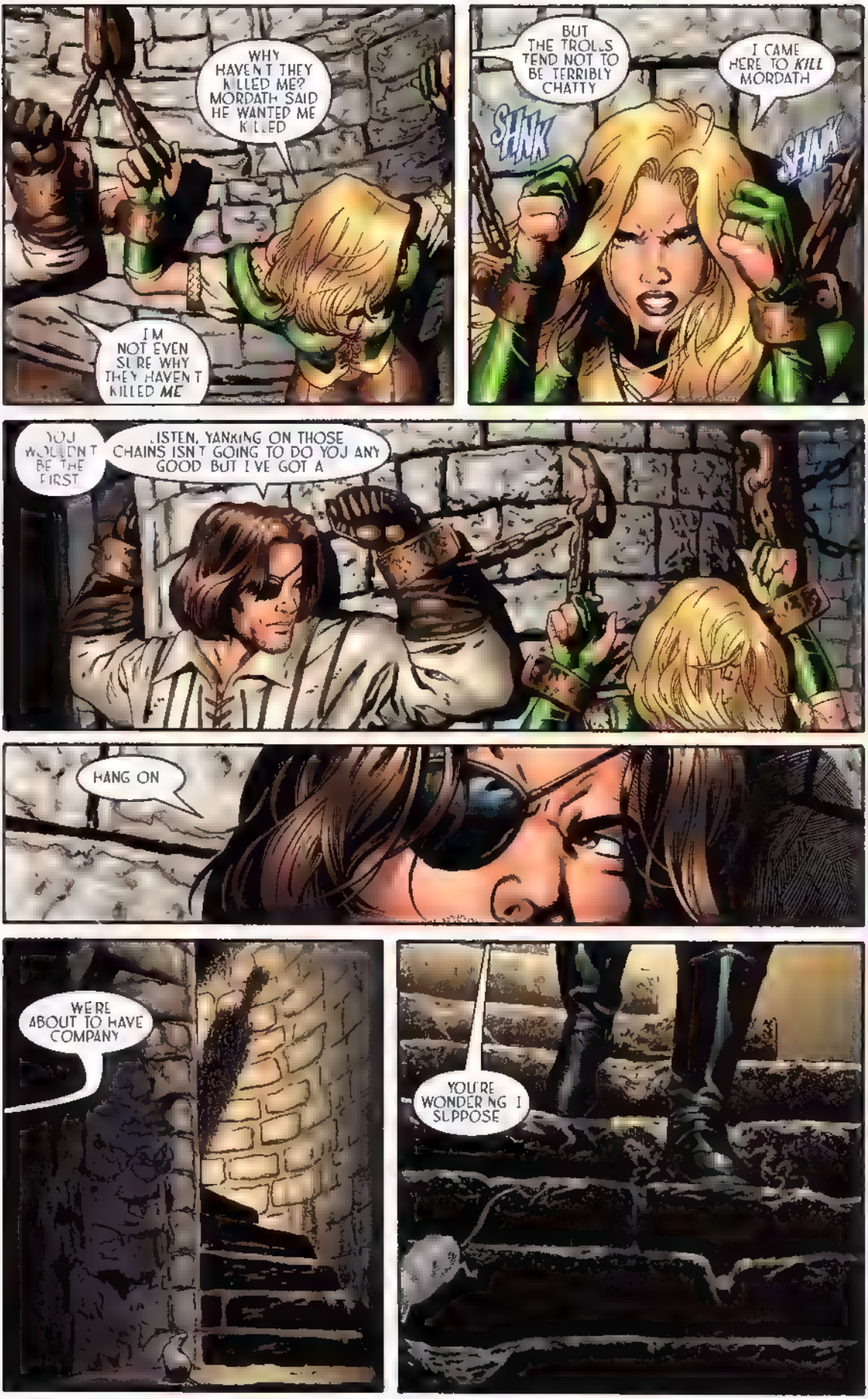
I'M OVER HERE

I'M ALIVE?

YOU MUST BE. YOU WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO ENJOY THE STENCH IN HERE IF YOU WEREN'T

MY NAME IS—

WAIT!
MY DOG. WHERE'S MY DOG?
I'M GOING TO GUESS AND SAY THAT'S HIM OVER THERE
THOUGH I THINK THE TRO..S HAVE HIM EARMARKED FOR TONIGHT'S STEW
TROLLS DON'T HAVE TERRIBLY D'SCERNING PALATES, IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING
WELCOME TO MORDATH'S DUNGEONS. THE ACCOMMODATIONS ARE F.LTHY, BUT THE CUISINE IS WORSE
I'M GARETH
YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE ME FOR NOT SHAK'NG YOUR HAND


WHY HAVEN'T THEY KILLED ME? MORDATH SAID HE WANTED ME KILLED
I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHY THEY HAVEN'T KILLED ME
BUT THE TROLLS TEND NOT TO BE TERRIBLY CHATTY
I CAME HERE TO KILL MORDATH
SHNK
SHNK
YOU WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST
LISTEN, YANKING ON THOSE CHAINS ISN'T GOING TO DO YOU ANY GOOD BUT I'VE GOT A
HANG ON
WE'RE ABOUT TO HAVE COMPANY
YOU'RE WONDERING I SUPPOSE

WHY YOU'RE STILL ALIVE
ACTUALLY I WAS WONDERING WHEN THE FOOD AROUND HERE IS GOING TO IMPROVE
I DON'T EVEN GET WHAT I ORDER MOST OF THE-
HOLD YOUR TONGUE!
EHH!
CHUD

AS I SAID
YOU'RE WONDERING WHY YOU'RE ALIVE
YOU KILLED MY FAMILY, YOU BASTARD!
YOU BURNED MY CITY!
YOU TOOK AWAY EVERY REASON I HAD TO LIVE AND I SWEAR I'LL SEE YOU DEAD FOR IT!
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE
I DON'T CARE
YOU CREPT INTO MY CASTLE TRULY BELIEVING YOU COULD KILL ME SUCH AN AUDACIOUS ACT
I DIED ONCE IT'S NOT AN EXPERIENCE I INTEND TO REPEAT
YOU'RE ALIVE BECAUSE I THOUGHT BETTER OF WASTING YOUR DEATH YOU PRESENT AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ME TO IMPART A LESSON TO THE FIVE LANDS
AS PROPER REWARD FOR YOUR AUDACITY, YOU'LL BE BURNED IN A VERY PUBLIC EXECUTION AND WHEN YOUR PYRE HAS GUTTERED OUT
SO WILL THE LAST BIT OF DEFIANCE ON QUIN
PTUH

YOU MAY KILL AND EAT THE DOG AT YOUR LEISURE
I TRUST YOU ENJOYED OUR CHAT.
I'LL SEE YOU AT YOUR EXECUTION
NICE DOGGY.
TONIGHT WE EAT WELL.
I SWEAR I'LL KILL YOU, MORDATH!
I'LL AVENGE MY HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER! I'LL—
I'M SORRY
WHAT?

I SAID, I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR FAMILY
I CAN'T IMAGINE ANYTHING MORE TERRIBLE
Oh
THANK YOU
MY NAME IS ARWYN
I LIVE IN GERRINDOR. LIVED
WE HOPED THE CITY MIGHT BE SPARED BECAUSE IT WAS ON THE NORTHERN BORDER, AND THERE WAS NO OPEN REBELLION TO MORDATH'S RULE
BUT MORDATH DOESN'T ALLOW ANYTHING TO ESCAPE HIS GRASP, DOES HE? SO THE TROLLS SWEPT INTO GERRINDOR
I THINK I MIGHT BE THE ONLY SURVIVOR
KREEG IS ALL I HAVE LEFT
I'VE HAD HIM SINCE MY HUSBAND GAVE HIM TO ME AS A PUPPY
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
USING ONE TOO MANY TROLLS FOR TARGET PRACTICE

BUT I DON'T PLAN ON *STAYING* HERE
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THIS. I TOOK IT OFF ONE OF THE DIMMER GUARDS.
WHICH DOESN'T NARROW IT DOWN MUCH, I KNOW
BUT IT'S FAIRLY USELESS TO *ONE* PERSON SEE? I CAN'T REACH THE OTHER MANACLE
BUT WITH *TWO* PEOPLE
KLAK
HERE
HURRY UP, THE TRO..S ARE LIABLE TO COME BACK AT ANY TIME
KLAK

NEXT PROBLEM - THIS PLACE IS HUGE.
CHLAK
I WAS UNCONSCIOUS WHEN THEY BROUGHT ME IN, MEANING I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO GET OUT OF HERE
I DON'T RELISH THE IDEA OF WANDERING THE HALLS UNTIL OUR FRIENDS WITH THE GREEN EYES STUMBLE ACROSS US.
SO I'LL FOLLOW YOUR LEAD, ASSUMING YOU KNOW THE WAY
AND IF WE DO HAVE TO FIGHT, AT LEAST THIS IS BETTER THAN USING HARSH WORDS
HERE, BOY. HOLD STILL
IF WE CAN GET THROUGH THE CASTLE WITHOUT BEING SEEN, THEN FIND THE STABLES AND STEAL HORSES.
WE MIGHT ACTUALLY BE ABLE TO ESCAPE
WAIT

STAY HERE UNTIL THEY PASS AND WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO
ARWYN?
ARWYN?
WONDERFUL
CHOKT
GHRK!

HUMAN! HOW DID YOU—
Ah
THE THINGS I DO.
NNF
FOR SOMEBODY I JUST MET
HHK!
GRGL
ARWYN? DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY, BUT
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?!
NO OFFENSE

BUT I THINK THIS WILL DO A LITTLE MORE GOOD IN *MY* HANDS THAN IT WOULD IN YOURS

SUIT YOURSELF

BUT I STILL WANT AN EXPLANATION

I THOUGHT YOU WERE TRYING TO *ESCAPE*, NOT BRING EVERY TROLL IN THE CASTLE DOWN ON TOP OF US.

I DON'T REALLY *CARE* IF EVERY TROLL IN THE CASTLE COMES AFTER US. ALL I WANT IS MORDATH

I CAME HERE TO KILL HIM. THAT'S WHAT I'M GOING TO DO

ARE YOU *INSANE?*

YOU THINK YOU'RE UP TO KILLING MORDATH WITH ALL THE POWER *HE* HAS?

WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE. YOU, ME, THE DOG... AND WE'RE LEAVING *RIGHT NOW*, WHILE WE STILL HAVE A SLIM CHANCE OF SURVIVING

GO AHEAD. TAKE KREEG WITH YOU.

BUT I'M STAYING

YOU *ARE* INSANE!

THOUGH MAYBE THAT'S A MOOT POINT

WHHSSSSH

THEY'VE ESCAPED FROM THE DUNGEONS!

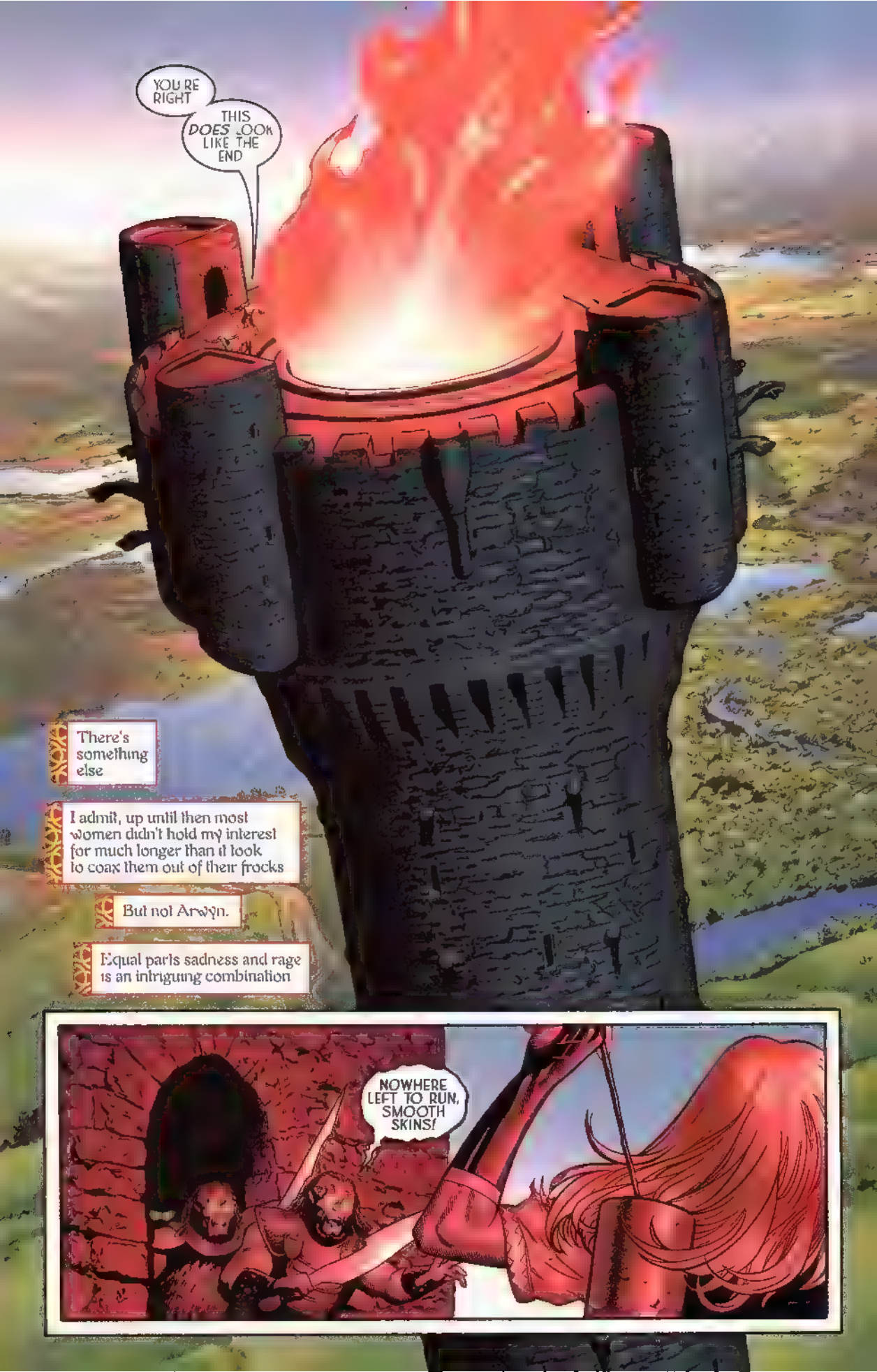
RAISE THE ALARM!

WEL..
SO MUCH FOR THE SNEAKY ROUTE
WE'LL MAKE OUR STAND *HERE*
WE'RE NOT *MAKING* A STAND
..LET'S *GO!*
HK
THUK
LOOK, YOU WANT A CHANCE TO KILL MORDATH
YOU NEED TO BE *ALIVE* TO DO IT!
FINE
KREEG, *FOLLOW*

I'M ENJOYING THIS *SO* MUCH MORE THAN BE NG IN THE DUNGEON!
CAN'T GET MUCH BETTER CAN IT?
CHASED THROUGH THE CASTLE OF AN UNDEAD EVIL TYRANT A HORDE OF TROLLS AT MY HEELS, A DOG AND A MADWOMAN FOLLOW NG ME
AND *SHE'S* GOT THE DAMN BOW
COME ON, MAYBE THIS WAY
OR *NOT*

HRAAAA
SHUK!
NOT GOOD, ARWYN! TROLLS IN FRONT OF US, TROLLS BEHIND US!
GYAA!
HOW IN AYDEN'S NAME DO WE GET OUT OF THIS PLACE?!
WE TRY THERE!
GRRFF

And that was our first meeting I also thought it was most likely our last
HRG
since I was convinced we'd both be dead shortly thereafter
UFF!
But here I am, still following her
It's not just the golden hair and the eyes like clear sky
Though those don't hurt
WE'RE REACHING THE END!

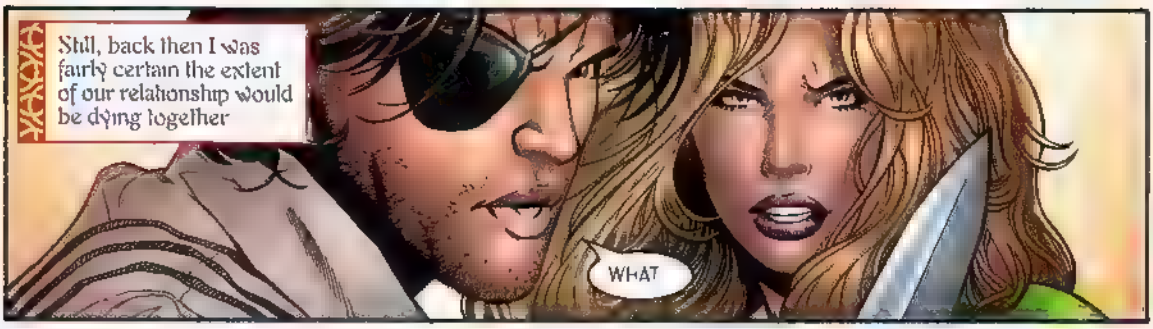

YOU'RE RIGHT
THIS DOES LOOK LIKE THE END
There's something else
I admit, up until then most women didn't hold my interest for much longer than it took to coax them out of their frocks
But not Arwyn.
Equal parts sadness and rage is an intriguing combination
NOWHERE LEFT TO RUN, SMOOTH SKINS!

LAST ARROW

APPARENTLY THIS IS WHERE WE MAKE OUR STAND
AT LEAST WE GOT TO ENJOY THE VIEW

Meeting her changed my life.
I WANT THE GIRL.
Heh.

Maybe it's changed hers a little as well
Huh?


Still, back then I was fairly certain the extent of our relationship would be dying together
WHAT

And then the other woman in my life appeared
I'M HERE FOR YOU

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Arwyn

Gareth

Mordath

Kreeg

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Now Mordath has risen from his tomb. Aided by a sigil that allows him to create and command fire, Mordath has conquered all that lies before him. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter, however, did not.

Thwarted in her attempt to slay Mordath, Arwyn was imprisoned but escaped from the despot's dungeons with the aid of a man named Gareth. Pursued by trolls to the uppermost regions of Mordath's fortress, Gareth, Arwyn and her dog Kreeg faced certain death. Then, as if from nowhere, a mysterious cloaked woman appeared.

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WHAT HAPPENED?

I'M SORRY, LORD MORDATH. .

...BUT BOTH PRISONERS HAVE DISAPPEARED.

YOU'RE THE CAPTAIN OF MY GUARD, BOHR

THE MOST *TRUSTED* OF ANY OF MY OFFICERS AND YET

AND *YET*

YOU TELL ME THAT *ALL* OF YOUR MEN WERE UNABLE TO PREVENT TWO HUMANS FROM ESCAPING

THIS CASTLE IS HOME TO AN ENTIRE *ARMY* OF TROLLS, BUT ONE MAN AND ONE WOMAN

NOT TO MENTION A *DOG*...

ARE SIMPLY *GONE* SO YOU EXPLAIN TO ME

...*HOW* CAN SUCH A THING HAPPEN?

WE STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW THEY FREED THEMSELVES FROM THE DUNGEON, LORD.

THEIR SHACKLES WERE UNLOCKED RATHER THAN BROKEN PERHAPS ONE OF THEM HAD OBTAINED A KEY.

UPON LEAVING THE DUNGEON THEY SLEW THREE TROOPERS AND TOOK THEIR WEAPONS, THEN FLED UP THE CENTRAL TOWER.

"...OUR WARRIORS AT THEIR HEELS, THEY'D SPENT THEIR LAST ARROW
"...THEY WERE AT OUR MERCY, PREPARED TO MAKE A FINAL STAND.
"OUR WARRIORS ADVANCED WITH EVERY INTENTION OF DESTROYING THEM...
"...BUT HESITATED WHEN A *LIGHT* APPEARED BEHIND THE PRISONERS."

"FROM THE LIGHT THERE APPEARED A WOMAN, AND SHE SAID.."
I'M HERE FOR YOU
"MY MEN TELL ME THE PRISONERS WERE NEARLY AS SHOCKED AS THEY
'NEITHER PRISONER APPEARED TO RECOGNIZE THE WOMAN. YET SHE GESTURED..
...AND ALL OF THEM FADED AWAY..
"...LEAVING NO TRACE."

AS I SAID, LORD, THEY DISAPPEARED.
I'M SORRY
DISAPPEARED WITH THE AID OF SOME KIND OF PHANTOM
THIS ARCHER
ARWYN.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHO SHE IS TO ME?
SHE IS A SURVIVOR. SHE HAD THE AUDACITY TO COME HERE AND TRULY BELIEVE SHE COULD SLAY ME
SHE DEFIES ME
AND NOW SHE HAS SLIPPED THROUGH MY GRASP
MY WILL IS UNCHALLENGED IN THE FIVE LANDS, SAVE FOR THIS WOMAN
I WON'T ABIDE IT SO YOU, BOHR
YOU WILL FIND HER.
TAKE AS MANY WARRIORS AS YOU NEED, KILL THE OTHERS WITH HER BUT I WANT HER FOUND AND BROUGHT TO ME
YES, LORD.
YOU KNOW THE PRICE OF FAILING ME, BOHR
...DON'T FORCE ME TO EXACT IT FROM YOU

"I'm here for you."
OKAY, WHERE ARE WE
...AND WHICH OF THE BLIND HILLS ARE YOU?
What does that mean?
I'm here for you?
I'm here for you?
EACH THING IN ITS OWN TIME
I'M THE ONE WHO RESCUED YOU
I'VE TAKEN THE NAME NEVEN

I'm still not sure exactly what she meant.

Even now, what I do know about Neven is far outweighed by what I don't

I suspect it always will be

AND THE *WHERE ARE WE* PART?

THE RUINS OF ORELYN CASTLE. I THOUGHT WE WOULD BE SAFE HERE, FOR THE MOMENT.

YOU CAN LOWER YOUR WEAPON. I DON'T INTEND TO HARM YOU.

ORELYN CASTLE? THAT'S *LEAGUES* FROM MORDATH'S FORTRESS

IT'S NOT POSSIBLE. HOW COULD -

WHY DID YOU SAVE US?

BECAUSE YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED OTHERWISE

THAT'S NOT AN ANSWER

WHO ARE YOU THAT YOU EVEN CARE?

I SAVED YOU BECAUSE I NEED YOU

BECAUSE I HAVE AN INTEREST IN SEEING MORDATH OPPOSED.

YOU WAVE YOUR STAFF AND SPIRIT ME AND GARETH AWAY FROM THE TOP OF MORDATH'S FORTRESS, BUT YOU NEED *OUR* HELP TO OPPOSE HIM?

MY ROLE IS TO ORCHESTRATE, NOT PARTICIPATE

IN OTHER WORDS, YOU WANT PAWNS.
WHOEVER YOU ARE, YOU CAN *DO* THINGS THAT WE'RE STANDING HERE INSTEAD OF LYING DEAD AT THE TOP OF THAT TOWER IS PROOF OF IT
BUT YOU'RE CHOOSING TO BECOME INVOLVED *NOW*? AFTER MORDATH HAS CONQUERED THE FIVE LANDS?
AFTER MY HUSBAND AND MY DAUGHTER WERE BUTCHERED?
SHE SAVED US, ARWYN. THAT HAS TO COUNT FOR SOMETHING
THE LEAST WE OWE HER IS A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN HERSELF
THERE'S A GREAT DEAL I *CAN'T* EXPLAIN TO YOU.
CAN'T OR *WON'T*?
ARWYN.
YOU SHOULD BE CONCERNING YOURSELF WITH *MORDATH*
NOT WITH ME
EVERYONE KNOWS THE TALE OF HOW MORDATH *DIED*.

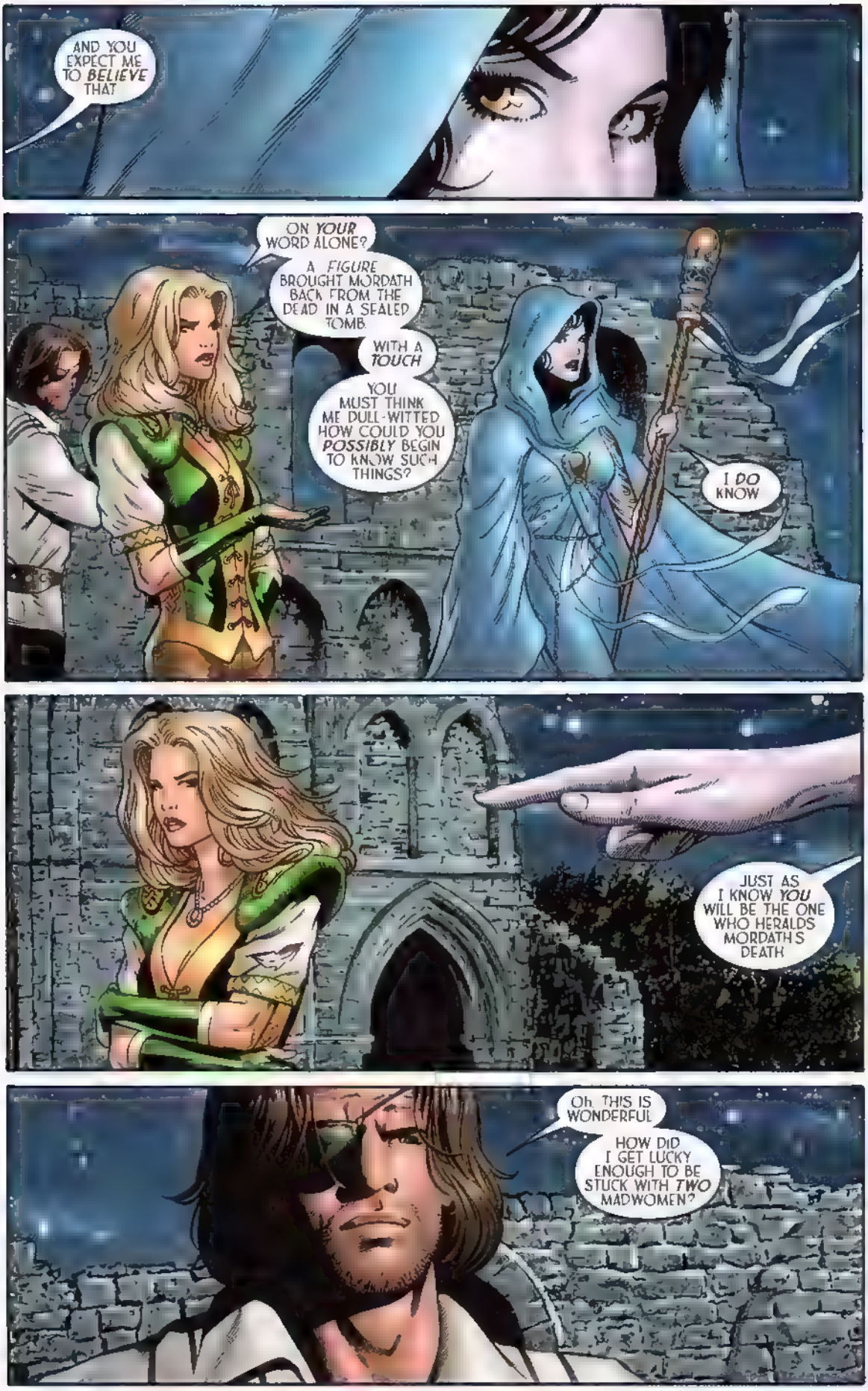
I CAN TELL YOU HOW HE CAME TO *LIVE AGAIN*
FOLLOWING HIS DEATH AT AYDEN'S HANDS MORDATH WAS TO BE CAST INTO THE SEA, ALONG WITH THE RUBBLE OF HIS RAZED FORTRESS
SO HIS CORPSE COULD TAINT NO PART OF THE FIVE LANDS.
BUT BEFORE IT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED, A SMALL FORCE OF TROLLS STOLE HIS BODY, EVENTUALLY SEALING IT WITHIN A SECRET TOMB IN THE MOUNTAINS OF GRINBOR
AND THERE IT STAYED FOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS WITH ONLY DARKNESS AND SILENCE AS COMPANIONS.
UNTIL A *FIGURE* APPEARED WITHIN THE TOMB, CONTEMPLATED THE DEAD TYRANT

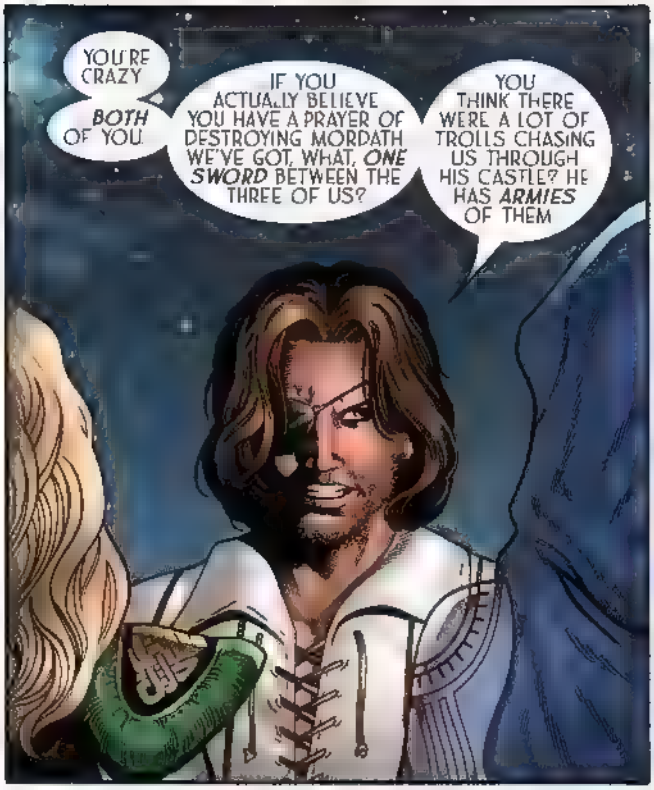
AND MADE THE DECISION, FOR GOOD OR ILL, TO GIVE MORDATH LIFE ONCE MORE
THE DEED WAS DONE WITH A MERE TOUCH
AND THEN THE FIGURE DEPARTED, HEEDLESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNLEASHING SUCH A VILLAIN UPON THE WORLD ONCE MORE
THE TOUCH GRANTED MORDATH THE SIGIL HE BEARS UPON HIS PATE INITIALLY A MARK OF RED AND YELLOW
OF EQUAL FORCES IN ETERNAL OPPOSITION

BUT MORDATH WAS A CREATURE OF UTTERLY MALIGN INTENT.
THE SHEER FORCE OF HIS SINISTER NATURE PERVERTED HIS SIGILS BALANCE
TURNING ITS ENTIRETY AS CRIMSON AS THE BLOOD SPILLED BY HIS MARAUDING ARMIES.
HE WAS WRENCHED BACK FROM THE VOID, HIS LIFE RETURNING JUST AS PAINFULLY AS IT WAS TAKEN

"A RESURRECTION AS VIOLENT AS HIS END"

WHAT ROSE FROM THAT GRAVE WAS THE SAME MORDATH S. AIN BY AYDEN
.YET A MORDATH BITTERLY CHANGED, AND MADE INFINITELY MORE DANGEROUS
HE DIDN'T QUESTION THE METHOD OF HIS RETURN, NOR THE MOTIVE BEHIND IT IT WAS ENOUGH TO LIVE AGAIN
" SO HE COULD WREAK HIS REVENGE UPON A WORLD THAT HAD SLIPPED HIS GRASP ONCE
BUT AS MORDATH PLOTTED HIS VENGEANCE, HE WAS UNAWARE THAT THE VERY WALLS OF HIS TOMB
HELD THE KEYS TO HIS DESTRUCTION


AND YOU EXPECT ME TO *BELIEVE* THAT
ON *YOUR* WORD ALONE?
A *FIGURE* BROUGHT MORDATH BACK FROM THE DEAD IN A SEALED TOMB
WITH A *TOUCH*
YOU MUST THINK ME DULL-WITTED HOW COULD YOU *POSSIBLY* BEGIN TO KNOW SUCH THINGS?
I *DO* KNOW
JUST AS I KNOW *YOU* WILL BE THE ONE WHO HERALDS MORDATH'S DEATH
OH, THIS IS WONDERFUL
HOW DID I GET LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE STUCK WITH *TWO* MADWOMEN?


YOU'RE CRAZY
BOTH OF YOU
IF YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVE YOU HAVE A PRAYER OF DESTROYING MORDATH WE'VE GOT, WHAT, ONE SWORD BETWEEN THE THREE OF US?
YOU THINK THERE WERE A LOT OF TROLLS CHASING US THROUGH HIS CASTLE? HE HAS ARMIES OF THEM

WHICH IS WHY THE FIVE LANDS ARE COMPLETELY IN HIS CONTROL WE WERE LUCKY TO ESCAPE WITH OUR LIVES ARWYN

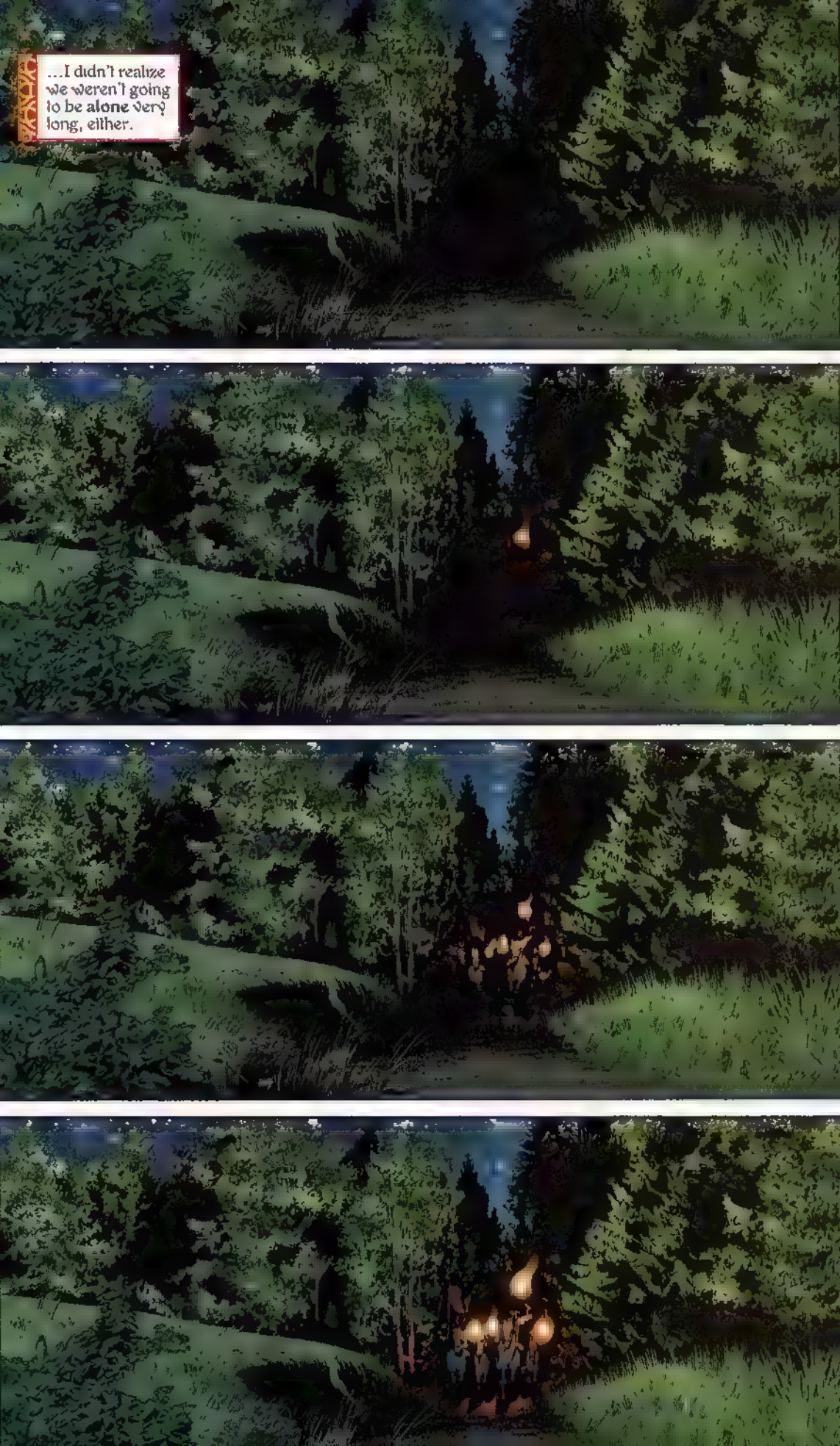
LET'S LEAVE IT AT THAT
WE SHOULDN'T BE TALKING ABOUT DESTROYING MORDATH, WE SHOULD BE TALKING ABOUT GETTING AS FAR AWAY AS POSSIBLE.
A LOT FARTHER THAN THE RUINS OF ORELYN CASTLE

I WATCHED MY CITY BURN I FELT THE HEAT ON MY FACE AND I SWORE I'D KILL MORDATH. I'LL FIND A WAY TO DO IT
AND I DON'T NEED HELP FROM SOME MYSTERY WOMAN WHO SPEAKS IN RIDDLES OR A ONE EYED SMART MOUTH WHO WANTS TO RUN THE OTHER WAY
I DON'T NEED ANYONE
KREEG.

. COME
HWUFF
DON'T GIVE ME THAT LOOK KREEG.
COME.
HE'S A SMART DOG HE DOESN'T WANT YOU TO LEAVE
I DON'T WANT YOU TO LEAVE, EITHER
HERE

I never wanted to become part of a quest.
Given the choice, I'd want to live my life peacefully...
THIS IS FOR YOU
FOR ME?
WHAT IS IT?
...not be lured into some grand undertaking
But sometimes events transpire to take away our choices.
I'm no hero.
And I'm certain Arwyn never thought of herself as one.
I doubt she does now, even after all that's happened.

THIS WAS AYDEN'S BOW
That's where it truly began, where we took our first steps on a long, long path
Though perhaps it's more true to say we were set upon that path by a pale mystery with soft orange eyes
I didn't realize the scope of what was being put into motion that night.
...what was being asked of us as we stood alone in those windswept ruins.
NOW IT'S YOURS
Of course...


...I didn't realize we weren't going to be alone very long, either.

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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Kreeg

Mordath

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Offered sovereignty over the world of Quin, Ayden declined, preferring to retreat to the solitude from which he'd come. However, before departing, Ayden broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb. Aided by a sigil that allows him to create and command fire, Mordath has conquered all that lies before him. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter, however, did not.

Thwarted in her attempt to slay Mordath, Arwyn was imprisoned but escaped from the despot's dungeons with the aid of a man named Gareth. Arwyn, Gareth and her dog Kreeg were then spirited away from Mordath's castle by a mysterious woman named Neven. They found themselves in the ruins of Orelyn castle, where Neven produced what she claimed was Ayden's bow. Unknown to any of them, troll pursuers were drawing closer.

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WHERE ARE THEY?

A ONE-EYED MAN AND TWO WOMEN, ONE WITH YELLOW HAIR AND ONE WITH A CLOAK.

WHERE?

I DON'T KNOW

=GHSP=

I TOLD YOU I DON'T KNOW!

I SWEAR

I'M TELLING THE TRUTH

THIS TASK WAS LAID BEFORE US BY LORD MORDATH HIMSELF

WE CAME TO THIS DUNGHEAP OF A VILLAGE SEEKING HELP.

...AND YOU'VE BEEN NO HELP AT ALL!

GLRK!

WAIT!

PLEASE, DON'T KILL HIM!
GIVE ME A *REASON* NOT TO KILL HIM
NNF

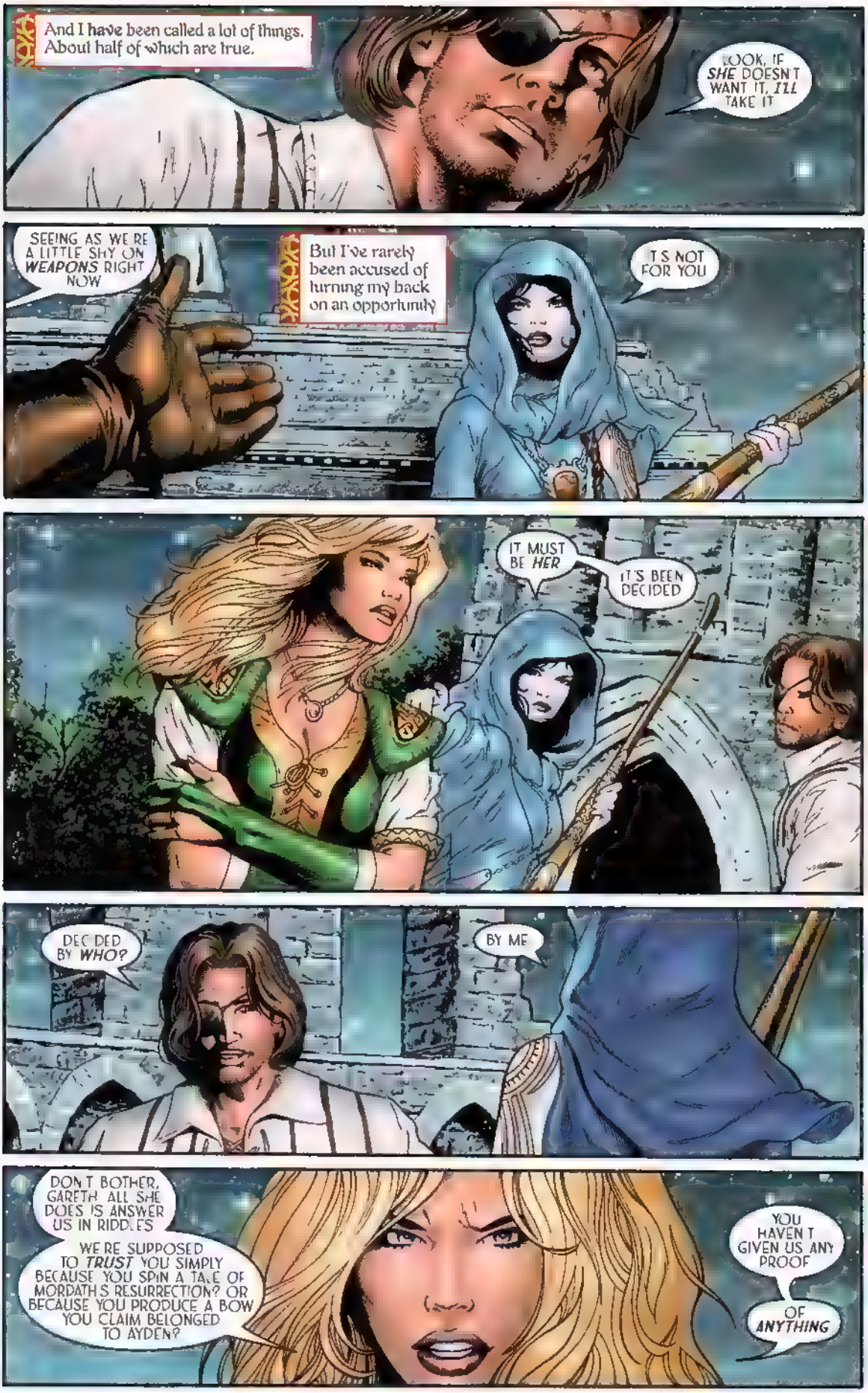
I SAW SOMETHING EARLIER TONIGHT
I WAS RETURNING FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE AND I SAW A LIGHT IN THE RUINS OF ORELYN CASTLE
NONE OF *US* EVER GO THERE. EVERYONE SAYS THE RUINS ARE HAUNTED
BUT THERE WAS A *LIGHT*. IT COULD HAVE BEEN A CAMPFIRE
THAT'S ALL I KNOW. THAT'S ALL *ANYONE* KNOWS

YOU'VE BEEN VERY ACCOMMODATING
Hmf.
I WONDER HOW MUCH *MORE* ACCOMMODATING YOU CAN BE
PLEASE DON'T

ENOUGH.

WE HAVE WHAT WE CAME FOR
WE HAVEN'T THE TIME FOR ANYTHING ELSE.
YES, SIR
LORD MORDATH WON'T LOOK KINDLY UPON ANY DELAYS IN FINDING YOUR QUARRY.
UNLESS YOU'D CARE TO EXPLAIN YOUR REASONS TO HIM PERSONALLY?
NO, COMMANDER BOHR. I'M SORRY, SIR
IF THESE HUMANS HAVE BEEN FOOLISH ENOUGH TO LIE TO US...
WE'LL RETURN AND BURN THIS ENTIRE VILLAGE TO THE GROUND.
WE HAVE A DUTY TO PERFORM
GET TO YOUR MOUNTS, ALL OF YOU...

"...AND WE'LL SEE WHAT HIDES IN THESE RUINS."
IT'S WHAT?
AYDEN'S BOW
AND NOW IT'S YOURS
You could call Arwyn a lot of things
DO YOU TAKE ME FOR A FOOL?
Gullible isn't one of them


And I have been called a lot of things. About half of which are true.
LOOK, IF SHE DOESN'T WANT IT, I'LL TAKE IT
SEEING AS WE'RE A LITTLE SHY ON WEAPONS RIGHT NOW
But I've rarely been accused of turning my back on an opportunity
IT'S NOT FOR YOU
IT MUST BE HER
IT'S BEEN DECIDED
DECIDED BY WHO?
BY ME
DON'T BOTHER, GARETH. ALL SHE DOES IS ANSWER US IN RIDDLES
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO TRUST YOU SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU SPIN A TALE OF MORDATH'S RESURRECTION? OR BECAUSE YOU PRODUCE A BOW YOU CLAIM BELONGED TO AYDEN?
YOU HAVEN'T GIVEN US ANY PROOF
OF ANYTHING

IF YOU CAN'T BE BOTHERED TO TELL US WHO YOU REALLY ARE AND WHAT YOU WANT, I CAN'T BE BOTHERED TO LISTEN
I'VE TOLD YOU MY NAME IS NEVEN
I'VE TOLD YOU I WANT MORDATH'S REIGN BROUGHT TO AN
GRRRR
EASY, BOY
SHUSH, KREEG
THE LAST THING WE NEED IS FOR YOU TO START BARKING AT SHADOWS
I'VE REVEALED TO YOU ALL THAT I CAN, ARWYN THERE ARE THINGS WHICH MUST REMAIN MINE ALONE TO KNOW, ASPECTS OF A LARGER TAPESTRY THAT DON'T CONCERN YOU
MY DESIRE TO BRING ABOUT MORDATH'S DOWNFALL IS GENUINE AND I DID SAVE YOUR LIVES
IS IT SO HARD FOR YOU TO HAVE FAITH?
YES.

YOU KNOW WHAT HE *IS*. YOU BETTER THAN ANYONE KNOW WHAT HE DOES
WHAT MORE MUST YOU LEARN OF MORDATH?
I TOLD YOU OF HIS RESURRECTION WHEN HE ROSE HIS FIRST THOUGHT WAS THE SAME AS THE FINAL THOUGHT THAT PASSED THROUGH HIS MIND THREE CENTURIES AGO.
HE DREAMED OF *CONQUEST*
'OF VENGEANCE
'AND WHEN HE GRASPED WHAT HE BELIEVED WOULD BE THE INSTRUMENT OF THAT VENGEANCE, HE DISCOVERED THE *POWER* WITH WHICH HE'D BEEN GRACED
THE FIERY POWER GRANTED HIM BY THE SIGIL

DO YOU NEED *MORE?*

MORDATH ERUPTED LIKE A FIERY STORM FROM HIS TOMB IN THE MOUNTAINS OF GRINBOR

"HE WENT BEFORE THE TROLL COUNCIL, WHERE THE MATRIARCHS HOLDSWAY OVER THE SQUABBLING CANS AND SILENCED ANY CHALENGES TO HIS SUPREMACY.

"THEIR LORD AND MASTER HAD RETURNED, JUST AS HE'D PROMISED

...AND ONCE AGAIN THEY BOWED DOWN BEFORE HIM

MORDATH CALLED FORTH THE CLANS FROM THEIR ALPINE STRONGHOLDS JUST AS HE HAD THREE HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE

"AND JUST AS BEFORE, HIS IRON WILL FORGED THEM INTO A POWERFUL ARMY TO BE UNLEASHED UPON QUIN

HE REBUILT HIS TERRIBLE FORTRESS AND TOPPED IT WITH AN EVER-BURNING FLAME, A MONUMENT TO HIMSELF AND HIS POWER

AND THEN THEY MARCHED OUT OF GRINBOR, CARRYING MORDATH'S EVIL BANNER BEFORE THEM AND THIRSTING FOR CONQUEST

"ALL OF THIS YOU KNOW ALREADY ONE BY ONE THE REST OF THE FIVE LANDS FELL TO HIM

THE CLIFFS OF ANKHARA BURNED

"SO MUCH BLOOD SPILLED IN OUDUBAI THAT NOT EVEN THE DESERT SANDS COULD ABSORB IT.

"THE CRYSTAL CITIES OF SKARNHIME SHATTERED AND MELTED

AND FINALLY MIDDELYN FINALLY *GERRINDOR.*

"THIS TIME NO AYDEN RODE FORTH TO DRIVE MORDATH BACK NO ONE APPEARED AND UNITED THE WARRIORS OF THE FIVE LANDS

"THERE ARE NONE TO STAND AGAINST HIM, NO POWER CAPABLE OF MATCHING HIS.

"MORDATH ***WILL*** SMOTHER QUIN IN HIS GRASP HE COULD EVEN BRING DESTRUCTION TO A MUCH ***GRANDER*** SCHEME

UNLESS SOMEONE STOPS HIM
AND YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVE GIVING ME THIS BOW WILL SOMEHOW BRING ABOUT MORDATH'S DOWNFALL?
OF COURSE
HOW ELSE WILL YOU FIND THE FIVE FRAGMENTS AND BRING AYDEN BACK TO THE FIVE LANDS?
THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ABOUT? SENDING ME OFF ON A QUEST TO GATHER THE FIVE FRAGMENTS?
THE ONLY WAY TO DEFEAT MORDATH IS TO SUMMON AYDEN
AYDEN LIVED THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO!
HE'S DEAD!
MORDATH DIED THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO
HE'S ALIVE

GRRF
KREEG, I TOLD YOU TO BE QUIET
THESE RUINS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE HAUNTED, RIGHT?
O.D KING WHATSISNAME?
HROOOWL
THERE S DEFIN.TEIY SOMETHING OUT THERE
BUT I DOUBT IT'S A GHOST
Faith is a dangerous thing

I don't mean religious faith, faith in a higher being.

That's your business..

.. though personally, I've said more than a few prayers in tight spots and it's always worked out all right, so who knows.

Oh, I THINK WE HAVE A *PROBLEM* HERE

TAKE THEM!

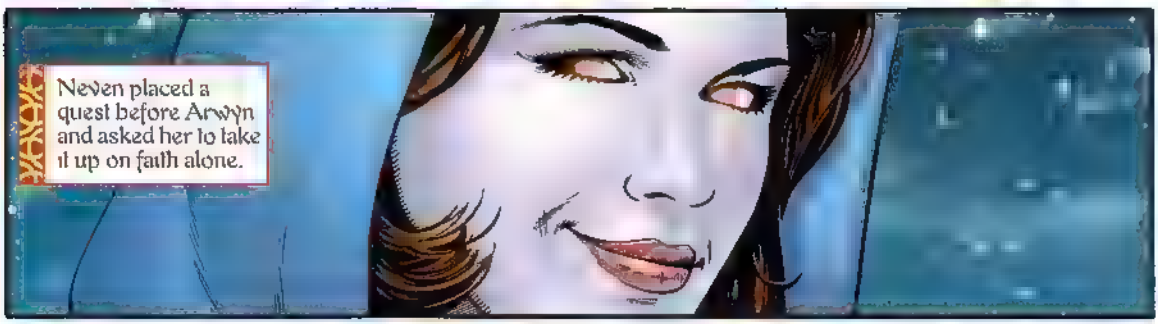
There are things you know, things you can prove, and so you believe in them

And there are those things you can't see, can't reach out and touch, and yet you believe in them just as firmly The air we breathe, for one.

That gulf between what you know and what you believe, you bridge that with faith.

Sometimes in this life, that's all you have.

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU BROUGHT ANY ARROWS.
Like believing the Five Fragments will truly summon Ayden back from wherever he went after slaying Mordath
Or believing Ayden still exists at all three hundred years later


Neven placed a quest before Arwyn and asked her to take it up on faith alone.

Like I said, dangerous thing
Believe too little and you blind yourself to what's possible. Believe too much and you blind yourself to what's real
HLLRG!
ABOUT TIME SOMEBODY HAS A BOW I CAN USE

NNF
FWOK
THANKS
HERE
THANKS
And it doesn't help that things are so often not what they seem
DON'T WASTE ANY
I THINK WE'RE GOING TO NEED ALL OF THEM
Who, for instance, would believe a one-eyed man...

...is really the greatest archer in all the Five Lands?
THUK
GFF!
THUK
AAGH!
THUK
I did say I've been called a lot of things.
YOU
YOU'RE THAT GARETH?
GARETH THE BOWMAN?
I'M LIKELY TO BE GARETH THE DEAD IF WE DON'T GET OUT OF HERE!
You know what faith really is? Faith is a sword
It cuts both ways

WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SOMETHING?!
GRRW
Sometimes it drives you toward a cause that's genuine but can't be proven.
GYAH!
DID YOU SEE THAT?
I'M A LITTLE BUSY RIGHT NOW, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH
WE'RE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO HOLD OUT LIKE THIS, ARWYN! THERE ARE TOO MANY OF THEM!
YOUR FRIEND IN THE HOOD HAD BETTER GET US OUT OF HERE!
NEVEN?
NEVEN?
NO
Oh, NO...
And sometimes it seduces you into believing in something...

...that's not really there
SHE'S GONE
KILL THE MAN AND THE DOG..
...BUT I WANT THE WOMAN ALIVE.

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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Mordath

Bohr

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Ayden retreated to the solitude from which he'd come, but broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

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Thwarted in her attempt to slay Mordath, Arwyn escaped from the despot's dungeons with the aid of a man named Gareth. Arwyn, Gareth and her dog Kreeg were then spirited away from Mordath's castle by a mysterious woman named Neven. They found themselves in the ruins of Orelyn Castle, where Neven produced what she claimed was Ayden's bow and asked Arwyn to undertake a quest to reunite the Five Fragments. But before Arwyn could learn more, Mordath's trolls attacked and Neven vanished.

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ARWYN!
ARWYN, I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOUR PALE FRIEND WENT..

BUT SHE DIDN'T TAKE *US* ALONG!

I've gotten a lot more used to Neven – the "pale friend" in question – appearing and disappearing as she pleases

Back then, I was a little less forgiving.

GRRR

Neven's idea of **help** is sometimes a little murky

Spiriting us away from Mordath's fortress? Helpful

Handing Ayden's bow to Arwyn, a bow that apparently makes an arrow something more than a stick with a sharp point on it? Helpful

Deserting us in the ruins of Orelyn Castle with trolls surrounding us? Not so much.

BOOM

COME ON, WHEN THAT *HITS* I THINK WE WANT TO BE SOMEWHERE ELSE!

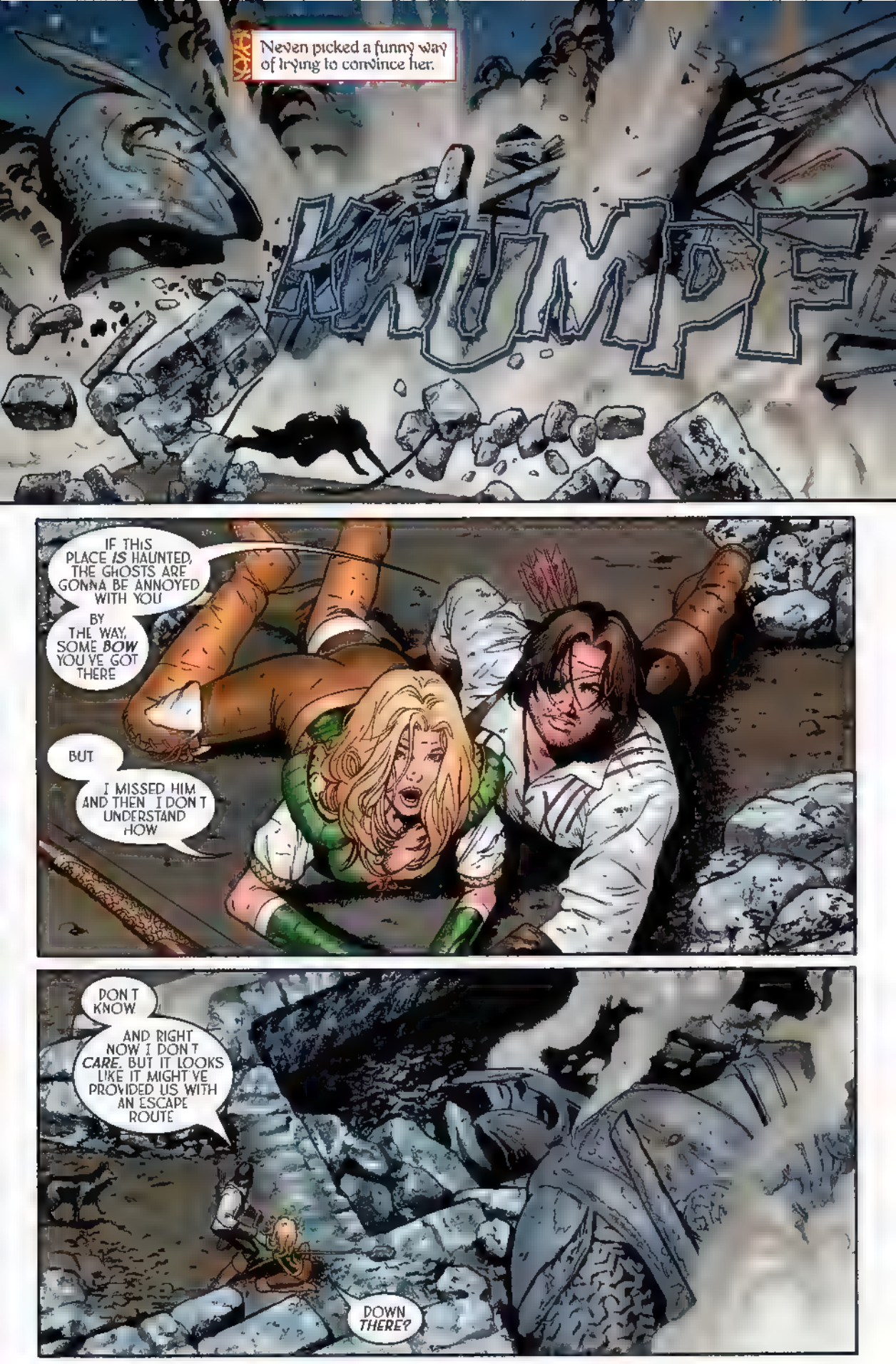
Neven wanted someone to take up a quest to reunite the Five Fragments of Ayden's arrow and summon him back to the Five Lands

And Ayden, of course, is supposed to destroy Mordath, just as he did three centuries ago.

For reasons that still aren't entirely clear to me, she chose Arwyn to take on the task

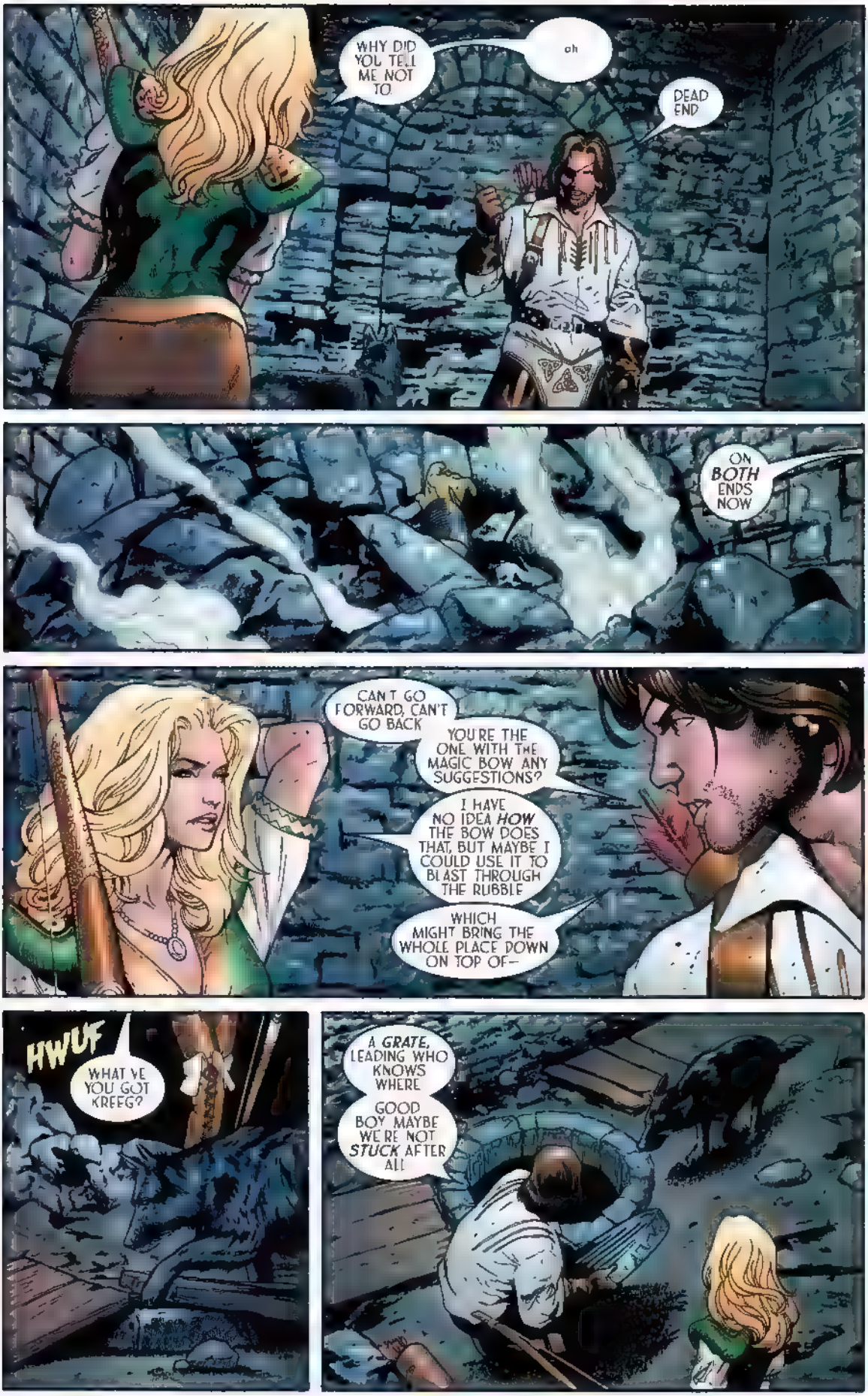
BACK!

GET BACK!

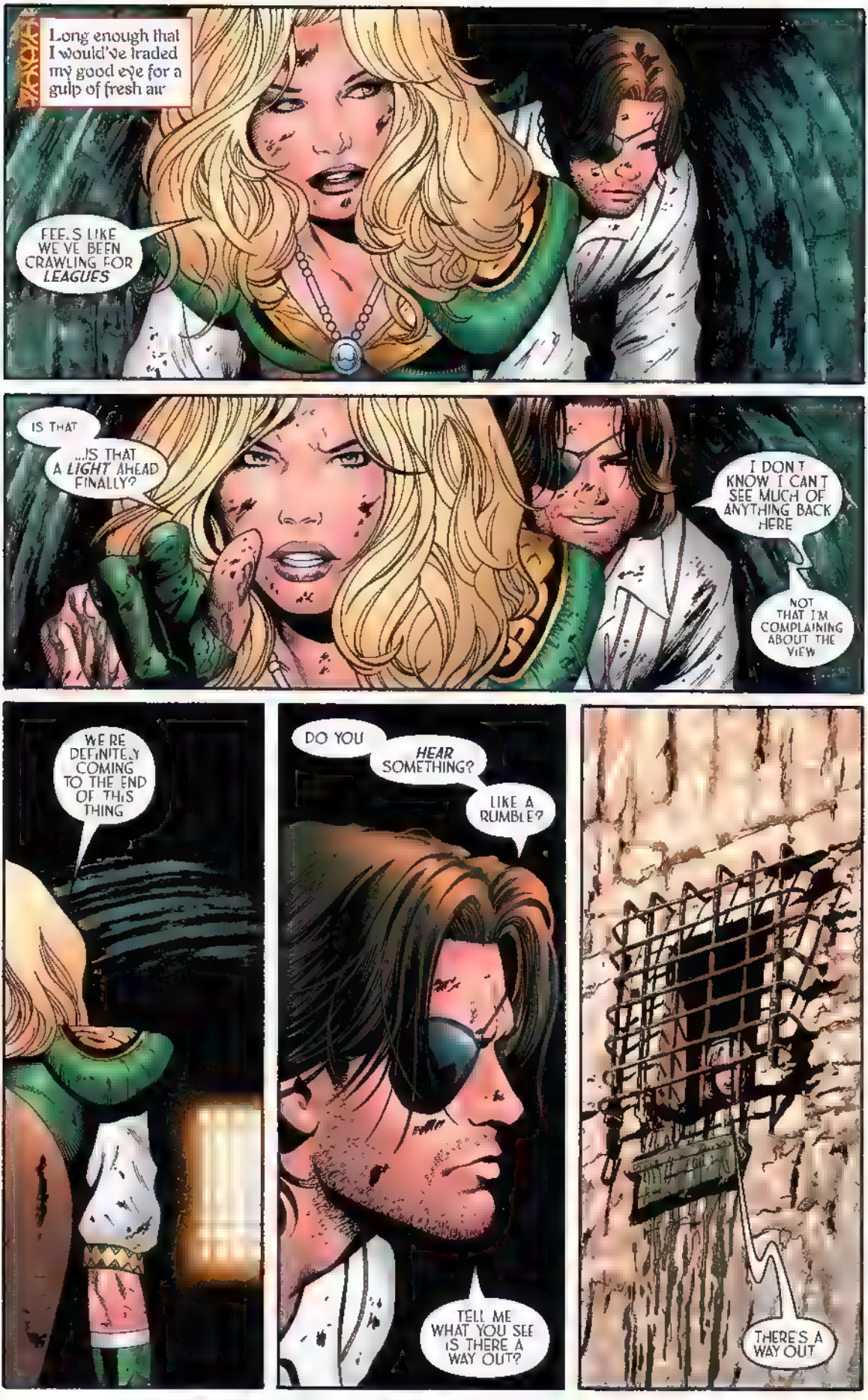

Neven picked a funny way of trying to convince her.
KRUMPF
IF THIS PLACE *IS* HAUNTED, THE GHOSTS ARE GONNA BE ANNOYED WITH YOU
BY THE WAY, SOME *BOW* YOU'VE GOT THERE
BUT
I MISSED HIM AND THEN I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW
DON'T KNOW
AND RIGHT NOW I DON'T *CARE*. BUT IT LOOKS LIKE IT MIGHT'VE PROVIDED US WITH AN ESCAPE ROUTE
DOWN *THERE*?

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT'S A WAY *OUT*? WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE IT LEADS
WELL, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT
NO, WE *DON'T* KNOW WHERE IT LEADS.
BUT IF WE STAY *HERE* I'VE GOT A PRETTY GOOD IDEA HOW THIS *ENDS*.
WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY
KREEG, *FOLLOW!*
NOW WHAT?
WHICH WAY DO WE GO?
TAKE YOUR PICK
ANYWHERE IS BETTER THAN HERE

DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY
BUT EVER SINCE I MET YOU SEEMS LIKE THE ONLY THING I'VE *DONE* IS GET CHASED BY TROLLS
BELIEVE ME
I DON'T LIKE IT ANY BETTER THAN YOU DO
ARWYN, *DON'T!*


WHY DID YOU TELL ME NOT TO
oh
DEAD END
OH BOTH ENDS NOW
CAN'T GO FORWARD, CAN'T GO BACK
YOU'RE THE ONE WITH THE MAGIC BOW. ANY SUGGESTIONS?
I HAVE NO IDEA HOW THE BOW DOES THAT, BUT MAYBE I COULD USE IT TO BLAST THROUGH THE RUBBLE
WHICH MIGHT BRING THE WHOLE PLACE DOWN ON TOP OF—
HWUF
WHAT'VE YOU GOT KREEG?
A GRATE, LEADING WHO KNOWS WHERE
GOOD BOY. MAYBE WE'RE NOT STUCK AFTER ALL

LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF DRAINAGE TUNNEL
IT MUST HAVE BEEN USED AS A *RUNOFF* FOR THE CASTLE
COME ON DOWN
SMELLS AWFUL
WAIT TIL YOU GET DOWN *HERE*
DON'T COMPLAIN. AT LEAST IT'S BETTER THAN TROLL BREATH UP CLOSE
SO WE'RE BACK TO *WHICH WAY DO WE GO?*
PICK A DIRECTION
EITHER ONE'S A MUCH BETTER OPTION THAN ANY WE'VE GOT UP THERE
ALL RIGHT
THIS WAY
We slogged through the filth and the muck for I don't know **how** long.

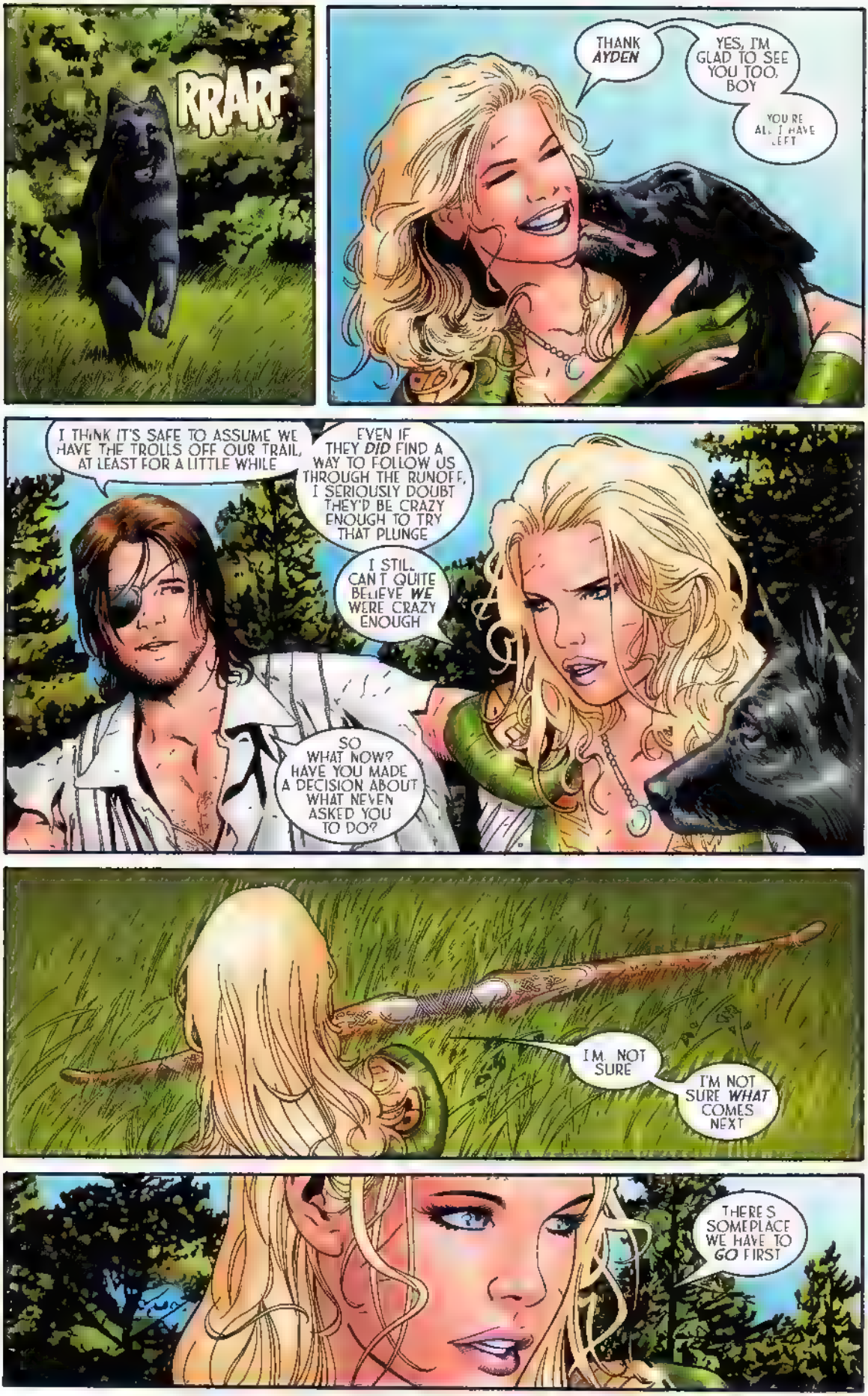

Long enough that I would've traded my good eye for a gulp of fresh air
FEELS LIKE WE'VE BEEN CRAWLING FOR LEAGUES
IS THAT
...IS THAT A LIGHT AHEAD FINALLY?
I DON'T KNOW I CAN'T SEE MUCH OF ANYTHING BACK HERE
NOT THAT I'M COMPLAINING ABOUT THE VIEW
WE'RE DEFINITELY COMING TO THE END OF THIS THING
DO YOU HEAR SOMETHING?
LIKE A RUMBLE?
TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE IS THERE A WAY OUT?
THERE'S A WAY OUT

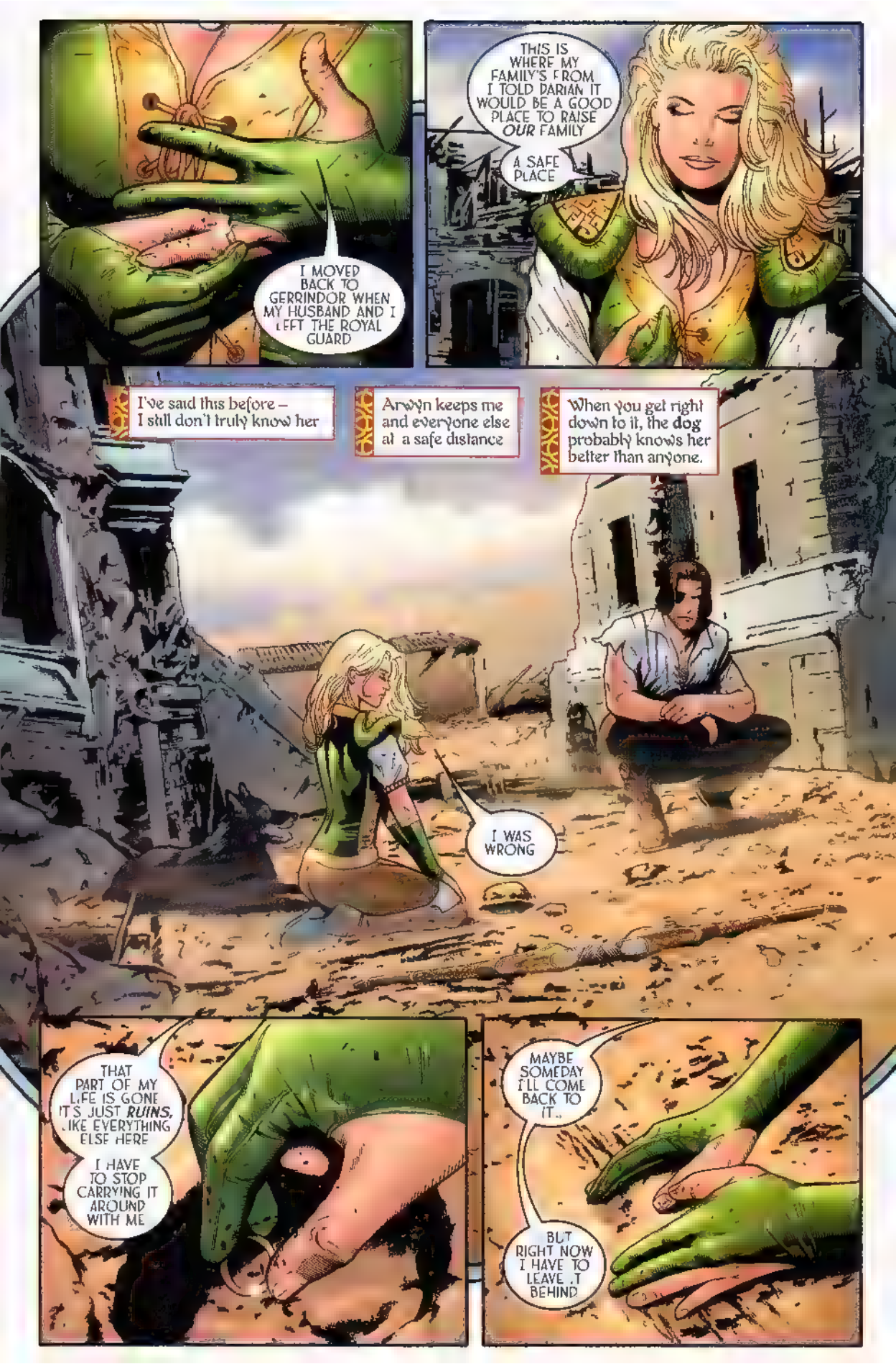
IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING

WE CAN'T GO BACK
BUT IT'S QUITE A FIRST STEP IF WE GO FORWARD, ASSUMING WE CAN EVEN GET PAST THAT.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I THINK I WON'T LET AN OLD PIECE OF IRON STAND IN THE WAY
KRONG
KRONG
SPISH
I'M WILLING, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THE CHANCE TO WASH THIS MUCK OFF MYSELF
ARE YOU SURE THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT TO DO?
IT'S NOT MUCH OF A DECISION
WHEN NOTHING MATTERS ONE WAY OR ANOTHER

YOU CAN SWIM, RIGHT?
Leap of faith
Literally
I think that's probably where our quest truly began. It was the first time we did something by choice...
...rather than because there was a horde of foul-mooded trolls within spitting distance
We decided our fate.
Throwing ourselves into space taught us a lesson for the trials that were to come.
When you fall down...
SPLSH
SPASH
SPASH

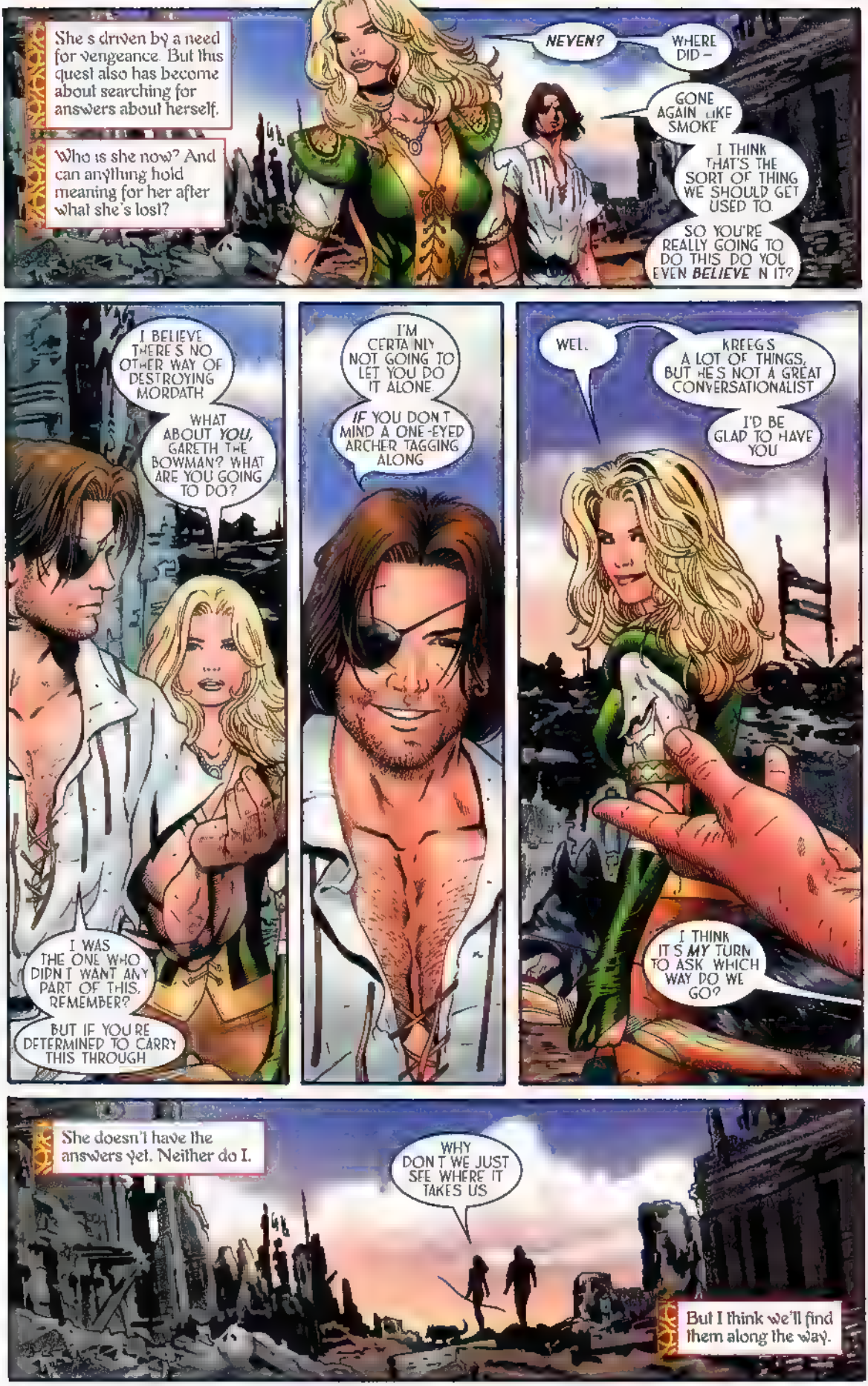
. . .You pull yourself up and keep going.
THAT'S SOMETHING I'VE NEVER DONE BEFORE
ESPECIALLY WITH A DOG ALONG FOR THE RIDE
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
FINE I'M—
KREEG
KREEG!
WHERE ARE YOU, BOY?!


RRARF
THANK AYDEN
YES, I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU TOO, BOY
YOU'RE ALL I HAVE LEFT
I THINK IT'S SAFE TO ASSUME WE HAVE THE TROLLS OFF OUR TRAIL, AT LEAST FOR A LITTLE WHILE
EVEN IF THEY DID FIND A WAY TO FOLLOW US THROUGH THE RUNOFF, I SERIOUSLY DOUBT THEY'D BE CRAZY ENOUGH TO TRY THAT PLUNGE
I STILL CAN'T QUITE BELIEVE WE WERE CRAZY ENOUGH
SO WHAT NOW? HAVE YOU MADE A DECISION ABOUT WHAT NEVEN ASKED YOU TO DO?
I'M NOT SURE
I'M NOT SURE WHAT COMES NEXT
THERE'S SOMEPLACE WE HAVE TO GO FIRST


I MOVED BACK TO GERRINDOR WHEN MY HUSBAND AND I LEFT THE ROYAL GUARD
THIS IS WHERE MY FAMILY'S FROM. I TOLD DARIAN IT WOULD BE A GOOD PLACE TO RAISE OUR FAMILY
A SAFE PLACE
I've said this before – I still don't truly know her
Arwyn keeps me and everyone else at a safe distance
When you get right down to it, the dog probably knows her better than anyone.
I WAS WRONG
THAT PART OF MY LIFE IS GONE. IT'S JUST RUINS, LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE HERE
I HAVE TO STOP CARRYING IT AROUND WITH ME
MAYBE SOMEDAY I'LL COME BACK TO IT...
BUT RIGHT NOW I HAVE TO LEAVE IT BEHIND

I've finally come to realize why.
DOES THAT MEAN YOU'RE READY TO TAKE UP THE TASK BEFORE YOU?
NEVEN
THIS IS PRETTY MUCH STANDARD FOR YOU, ISN'T IT? POPPING UP OUT OF NOWHERE, THEN VANISHING WHEN YOU PLEASE
WE COULD'VE USED A LITTLE HELP BACK AT ORELYN CASTLE, BUT APPARENTLY YOU HAD SOMEWHERE ELSE TO BE
YOU'RE HERE, AREN'T YOU? YOU DIDN'T NEED ME
THIS DOESN'T SERVE ANY PURPOSE GARETH
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO TOLD ME TO GIVE HER A CHANCE
WILL YOU GIVE ME A CHANCE?
WHY ME? WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE ME?
I CAN TELL YOU ONLY THAT THE QUEST FOR THE FIVE FRAGMENTS MUST FAIL TO YOU ALL WILL BE LOST UNLESS AYDEN RETURNS
I WILL AID YOU WHEN NECESSARY PROVIDE YOU WITH GUIDANCE.
BUT THIS QUEST WILL BE YOURS, NOT MINE
BECAUSE YOU ORCHESTRATE, YOU DON'T PARTICIPATE
SO YOU'VE TOLD US ALREADY
I'M NOT CONVINCED AYDEN STILL LIVES
I'M NOT SURE WHY I WAS CHOSEN RATHER THAN ANOTHER
AND I KNOW I DON'T LIKE BEING FORCED INTO THIS ROLE

BUT I WHAT *ELSE* IS GOING TO GIVE MY LIFE ANY MEANING?
YES.
I'LL TAKE UP YOUR QUEST
Arwyn doesn't let anyone know her because she doesn't know **herself** anymore
She buried everything she was


She's driven by a need for vengeance. But this quest also has become about searching for answers about herself.
Who is she now? And can anything hold meaning for her after what she's lost?
NEVEN?
WHERE DID –
GONE AGAIN LIKE SMOKE
I THINK THAT'S THE SORT OF THING WE SHOULD GET USED TO
SO YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO DO THIS DO YOU EVEN BELIEVE IN IT?
I BELIEVE THERE'S NO OTHER WAY OF DESTROYING MORDATH
WHAT ABOUT YOU, GARETH THE BOWMAN? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
I'M CERTAINLY NOT GOING TO LET YOU DO IT ALONE
IF YOU DON'T MIND A ONE-EYED ARCHER TAGGING ALONG
WELL
KREEGS A LOT OF THINGS, BUT HE'S NOT A GREAT CONVERSATIONALIST
I'D BE GLAD TO HAVE YOU
I WAS THE ONE WHO DIDN'T WANT ANY PART OF THIS, REMEMBER?
BUT IF YOU'RE DETERMINED TO CARRY THIS THROUGH
I THINK IT'S MY TURN TO ASK WHICH WAY DO WE GO?
She doesn't have the answers yet. Neither do I.
WHY DON'T WE JUST SEE WHERE IT TAKES US
But I think we'll find them along the way.

YOU'RE BACK AGAIN
WHO ARE YOU?
AND WHY DO YOU TROUBLE ME?
HERE I'M CALLED NEVEN THAT'S ENOUGH FOR NOW.
BUT I DO KNOW WHO YOU ARE, AYDEN
DO YOU?
IF THAT'S SO, THEN YOU KNOW WHY I CAME HERE – TO BE LEFT ALONE
THIS IS THE WAY I CHOOSE TO LIVE MY LIFE. I CARE NOTHING FOR THE WORLD BEYOND THESE SHORES.
ONCE YOU DID.
ONCE YOU WERE A FATHER TO A GREAT MANY. ONCE YOU WERE EVEN STIRRED TO SAVE THIS WORLD.

THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN I STILL CLUNG TO AN ILLUSION OF IDEALISM
BUT NO MORE
IT IS WITHIN YOUR POWER TO DESTROY MORDATH
YOU SWORE YOU'D RETURN IF THE WORLD NEEDED YOU IF THE FIVE FRAGMENTS WERE REUNITED
YOU ARE NEEDED
NO ONE NEEDS ME
THERE WAS A TIME I WAS STILL FOOLISH ENOUGH TO BELIEVE UNITY WAS POSSIBLE. NOW...
I'M OLD AND WEARY. I FEAR DISCORD IS THE TRUE NATURE OF THINGS
IS THAT WHY YOU STOLE MY BOW?
TO PIQUE MY INTEREST?
N PART
I GAVE THE BOW TO A WOMAN, ARWYN, WHO UNDERTAKES THE QUEST TO GATHER THE PIECES OF YOUR ARROW
THERE'S A BIT OF YOU IN HER, I THINK. SHE TOO HAS LOST A GREAT DEAL
THOUGH SHE DID NOT TURN HER BACK ON THE WORLD
WHO ARE YOU TRULY?
ONE WHO HAS AN INTEREST IN A GREAT MANY THINGS
MYSTERIES NO LONGER INTRIGUE ME
I WILL NOT BECOME INVOLVED
I EXPECTED NOTHING DIFFERENT
WILL YOU AT LEAST OBSERVE ARWYN, THEN.

BECAUSE THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Neven

Mordath

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Ayden retreated to the solitude from which he'd come, but broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb. Aided by a sigil that allows him to create and command fire, Mordath has again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments at the behest of a mysterious and apparently magical woman calling herself Neven. Armed with Ayden's legendary bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn has dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

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YOUR MAJESTY...

YOU'VE JUST ABDICATED!
CHWUNK
THE KING IS DEAD

LONG LIVE THE KING
THE OTHER AERIES HAVE FALLEN, LORD MORDATH
THE WHOLE OF ANKHARA IS OURS.
WHERE NEXT, LORD?
SOUTH
THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH SAND IN OUDUBAI'S DESERTS TO SOAK UP THE BLOOD WE'LL SPILL
SOON ALL THE FIVE LANDS WILL BE MINE
AND MY DESTINY WILL BE COMPLETE

We're all haunted by the past
We're haunted by the things we've done
Or the things we haven't done.
Even the Five Lands are haunted.
..cursed by a vengeful ghost very literally returned from the grave
MORDATH

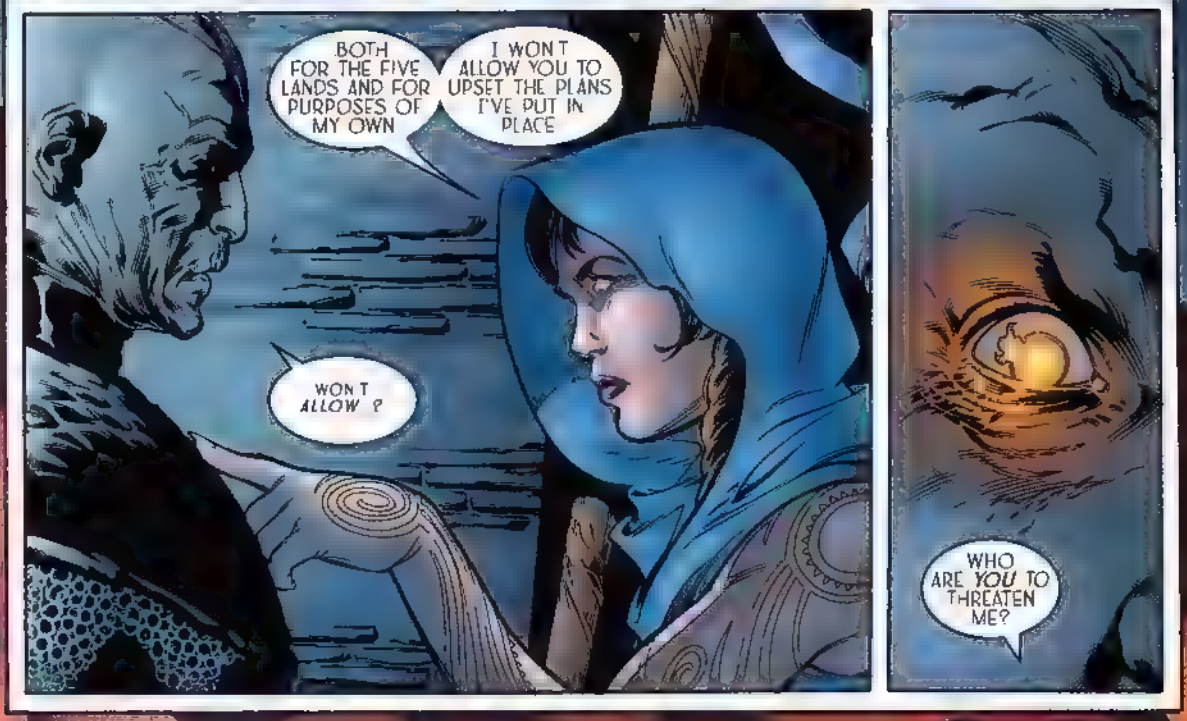
I THINK IT'S TIME WE TALKED.
YOU'RE THE ONE
YOU FREED HER
YES.
I CAN'T ALLOW THAT TO GO UNPUNISHED

Arwyn is haunted by memories of her family. Of how they died and what she might have done if she'd been there with them.
Me, I'm haunted by things I'd rather not talk about.
But we all have something ..
..and we're hardly ever able to make it disappear
We never escape the past because it's always behind us
Always following us
The trolls Mordath set on our trail aren't half so dogged.
FINISHED?

WHO ARE YOU?
HERE I'M CALLED NEVEN
NEVEN
WHAT DO YOU WANT OF ME?
I WANT NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU
I WAS NEVER IN AGREEMENT WITH YOUR RESURRECTION
YOU KNOW?
YOU WERE THERE?
I WAS.
I BORE WITNESS WHEN YOU WERE MARKED WITH THE SIGIL

IT WAS YOU WHO BROUGHT ME BACK?
NO THAT WAS ANOTHER'S PURVIEW
THEN WHO? WHY?
WHY WAS I GIVEN LIFE AGAIN?
THE DEED WAS MISGUIDED THE REASONS ARE NOT YOUR CONCERN
I WILL TELL YOU A CONFLICT IS COMING
AT LEAST TELL ME WHY I WAS BROUGHT BACK IN THIS FORM, RATHER THAN WHAT I WAS
I'M BARELY A HUSK
YOU'RE NO DIFFERENT
IN YOUR FIRST INCARNATION YOU WERE EVIL CLOTHED IN FLESH
YOU STILL ARE
THE SYMBOL YOU WEAR IS MEANT TO BE A GIFT, THE FINAL LINK IN A CHAIN OF POSSIBILITY
BUT YOU'VE MADE IT INTO A MARK OF MALEVOLENCE
IS THIS THE SOLE REASON YOU'VE COME HERE? TO TAUNT ME WITH HINTS AND MYSTERIES?
I'VE COME HERE SIMPLY TO TELL YOU ARWYN WILL BRING ABOUT YOUR DESTRUCTION

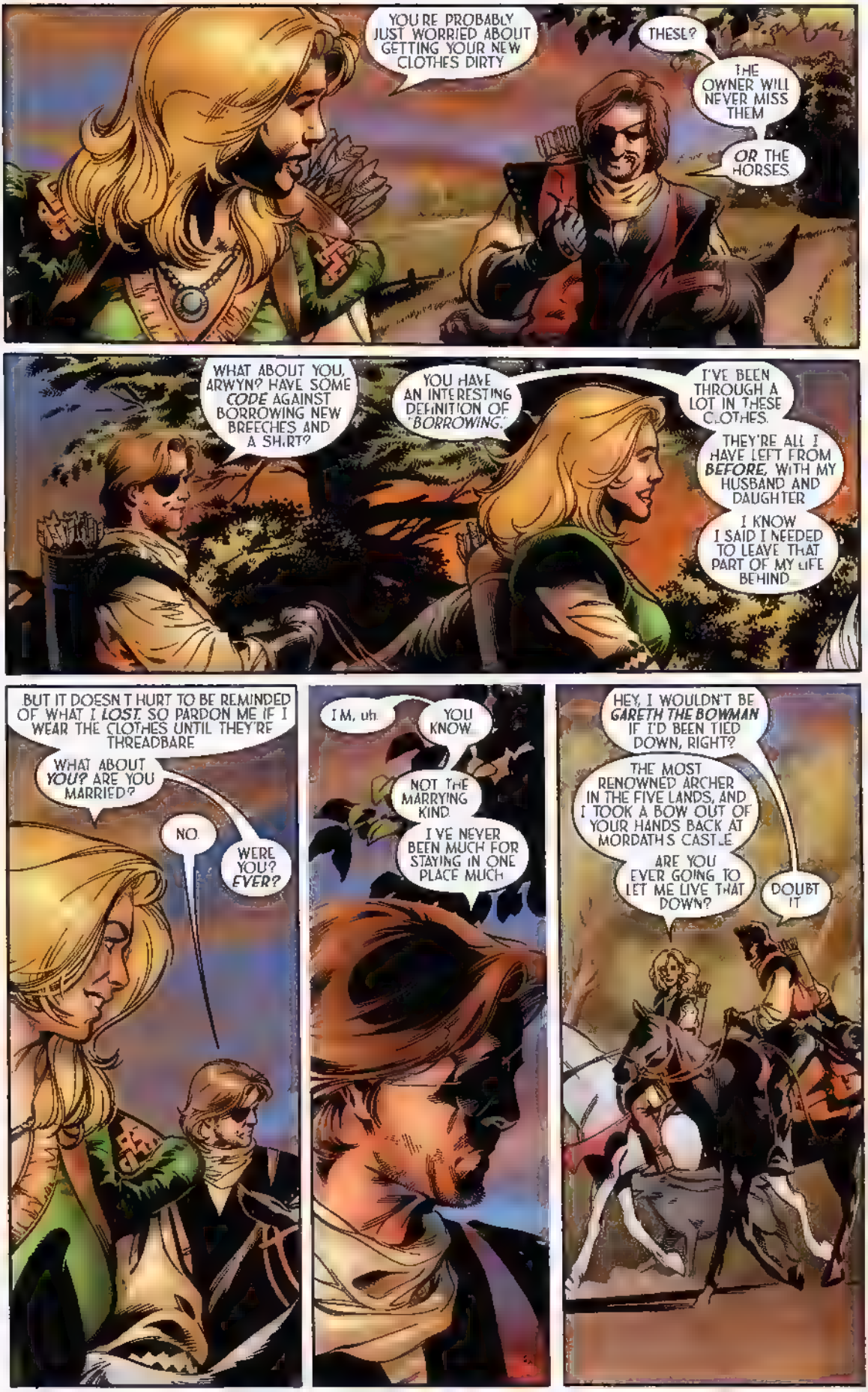
THE ARCHER? SHE'S A *NUISANCE*, NOTHING MORE
MY TROLLS WILL FIND HER AND ELIMINATE HER
YOU HAVE POWER, OBVIOUSLY IF YOU WANT ME DESTROYED
WHY NOT ATTEMPT IT *YOURSELF?*
THAT'S NOT A PATH I CHOOSE TO FOLLOW
I'M NOT A PARTICIPANT I LET *OTHERS* FILL THAT ROLE
AND ARWYN IS MORE THAN CAPABLE OF SHEPHERDING YOUR DOWNFALL
NOW THAT SHE HAS AYDEN'S BOW
WHAT?
HOW COULD THAT BE?
I GAVE IT TO HER AFTER I TOOK IT FROM AYDEN
FROM AYDEN?
FROM AYDEN'S *TOMB*. PERHAPS I'VE READ THE LEGEND—AYDEN IS TO RETURN IN THE FIVE LANDS' TIME OF NEED
IT'S A *DELUSION* AYDEN DIED CENTURIES AGO. HE *MUST* HAVE.
YOU DIED CENTURIES AGO
I LEAVE YOU WITH A PROMISE, MORDATH AYDEN *WILL* RETURN


BOTH FOR THE FIVE LANDS AND FOR PURPOSES OF MY OWN
I WON'T ALLOW YOU TO UPSET THE PLANS I'VE PUT IN PLACE
WON'T ALLOW ?
WHO ARE *YOU* TO THREATEN ME?

WHO ARE YOU?

Hn
LORD?
IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
I THOUGHT I HEARD YOU SPEAKING WITH SOMEONE
NO, LUTH
THERE WAS NO ONE HERE
THEN.
..DO YOU REQUIRE ANYTHING?
NOTHING YOU CAN GIVE ME

This quest, I suppose, is haunted by the past, too
IT'LL BE GETTING DARK SOON
We're trying to exorcise a demon who died centuries ago.
AND I'M NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO SPENDING ANOTHER NIGHT SLEEPING IN A CAVE OR UNDER A BRIDGE
GARETH, DO YOU KNOW IF THERE'S AN *INN* SOMEWHERE UP AHEAD?
The Five Lands are held in the grip of an evil from three hundred years ago
..and we're looking to the past to deliver us from it.
I'M NOT SURE. I'VE NEVER TRAVELED THIS ROAD
BUT I WOULDN'T TURN MY NOSE UP AT FRESH SHEETS AND A SOFT PILLOW
THE ONLY ONE WHO DOESN'T SEEM TO *MIND* SLEEPING ROUGH
IS *HIM* RIGHT, KREEG?
HWUFF


YOU'RE PROBABLY JUST WORRIED ABOUT GETTING YOUR NEW CLOTHES DIRTY
THESE?
THE OWNER WILL NEVER MISS THEM
OR THE HORSES
WHAT ABOUT YOU, ARWYN? HAVE SOME CODE AGAINST BORROWING NEW BREECHES AND A SHIRT?
YOU HAVE AN INTERESTING DEFINITION OF "BORROWING."
I'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT IN THESE CLOTHES.
THEY'RE ALL I HAVE LEFT FROM BEFORE, WITH MY HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER
I KNOW I SAID I NEEDED TO LEAVE THAT PART OF MY LIFE BEHIND
BUT IT DOESN'T HURT TO BE REMINDED OF WHAT I LOST. SO PARDON ME IF I WEAR THE CLOTHES UNTIL THEY'RE THREADBARE
WHAT ABOUT YOU? ARE YOU MARRIED?
NO.
WERE YOU? EVER?
I'M, uh...
YOU KNOW...
NOT THE MARRYING KIND.
I'VE NEVER BEEN MUCH FOR STAYING IN ONE PLACE MUCH
HEY, I WOULDN'T BE GARETH THE BOWMAN IF I'D BEEN TIED DOWN, RIGHT?
THE MOST RENOWNED ARCHER IN THE FIVE LANDS, AND I TOOK A BOW OUT OF YOUR HANDS BACK AT MORDATH'S CASTLE
ARE YOU EVER GOING TO LET ME LIVE THAT DOWN?
DOUBT IT

YOU THINK THE TROLLS ARE STILL FOLLOWING US?
This is how the story goes:
Mordath stood at the brink of conquering the Five Lands when an unknown warrior appeared
FOLLOWING US? NO
THEY CAN'T HAVE ANY WAY OF KNOWING WHERE WE ARE
His name was Ayden, and he slew Mordath
When Ayden plucked the killing arrow from Mordath's corpse, he broke it into Five Fragments
These he scattered, one to each of the Five Lands
BUT I DOUBT THEY'VE STOPPED SEARCHING
I DON'T THINK THERE'S MUCH OF A FUTURE IN FAILING MORDATH
. and vowed to return should the Fragments ever be reunited
Then Ayden went away
FOR WHAT HE DID TO MY HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER
MORDATH'S THE ONE WITHOUT MUCH OF A FUTURE
Three hundred years later, his bow ended up in Arwyn's hands.

and we set out to find the first of the Fragments
YOU VE HEARD THE TALES OF THE FRAGMENT HERE IN MIDDELYN
DO YOU BELIEVE T S ACTUALY PART OF SOME DRAGON S TREASURE HORDE?
HA!
Oh, COME ON, ARWYN I VE SEEN A LOT OF THINGS N THE FIVE LANDS.
I'VE SEEN WHOLE CITIES CARVED OUT OF ICE I VE SEEN DESERT SANDS THAT COULD ACTUALY SPEAK
BUT A DRAGON? NEVER.
IT S PROBABLY JUST A BIG LIZARD THE LOCALS HAVE BUILT INTO A LEGEND TO SPOOK TRAVELERS.
STILL, I GUESS T'S AT LEAST A PLACE TO START, ISN T IT?
HWUFF
WUF
WUF
NOW WHAT S GOT HIM EXCITED?

LOOKS LIKE WE WON'T BE SLEEPING UNDER A BRIDGE AFTER ALL.
Ooh, I'D KILL FOR A BATH.
RACE YOU FOR A BATH?
RACE ME? YOU MEAN TO THE INN?
ISN'T THAT A LITTLE CHILDISH?
ONLY IF YOU LOSE!
HYAH!

STILL THE FASTEST RIDER WITH ONE EYE IN THE FIVE LANDS
AT LEAST THE ONE WITH THE FASTEST HORSE.
YOU'VE NEVER TOLD ME – HOW DID YOU LOSE THAT EYE?
IN A CARD GAME.
KREEG, YOU BE A GOOD BOY AND STAY HERE, OKAY?
HWUF
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE.
YOU KNOW, I THINK IT'S PROBABLY SAFE TO LEAVE THE BOW WITH THE HORSES.
the Serpent's Tooth
CONSIDERING WHAT IT CAN DO, NO THANKS.

I'VE BEEN IN A HUNDRED OF THESE PLACES

SOMETIMES THEY GET A LITTLE ROUGH WHEN YOU GET A MIX OF LOCALS AND TRAVELERS

BUT MAYBE WE CAN PICK UP SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE FRAGMENT

LET ME TAKE THE LEAD

LEAD AWAY

BOYS

HOW'S EVERYBODY DOING TONIGHT?

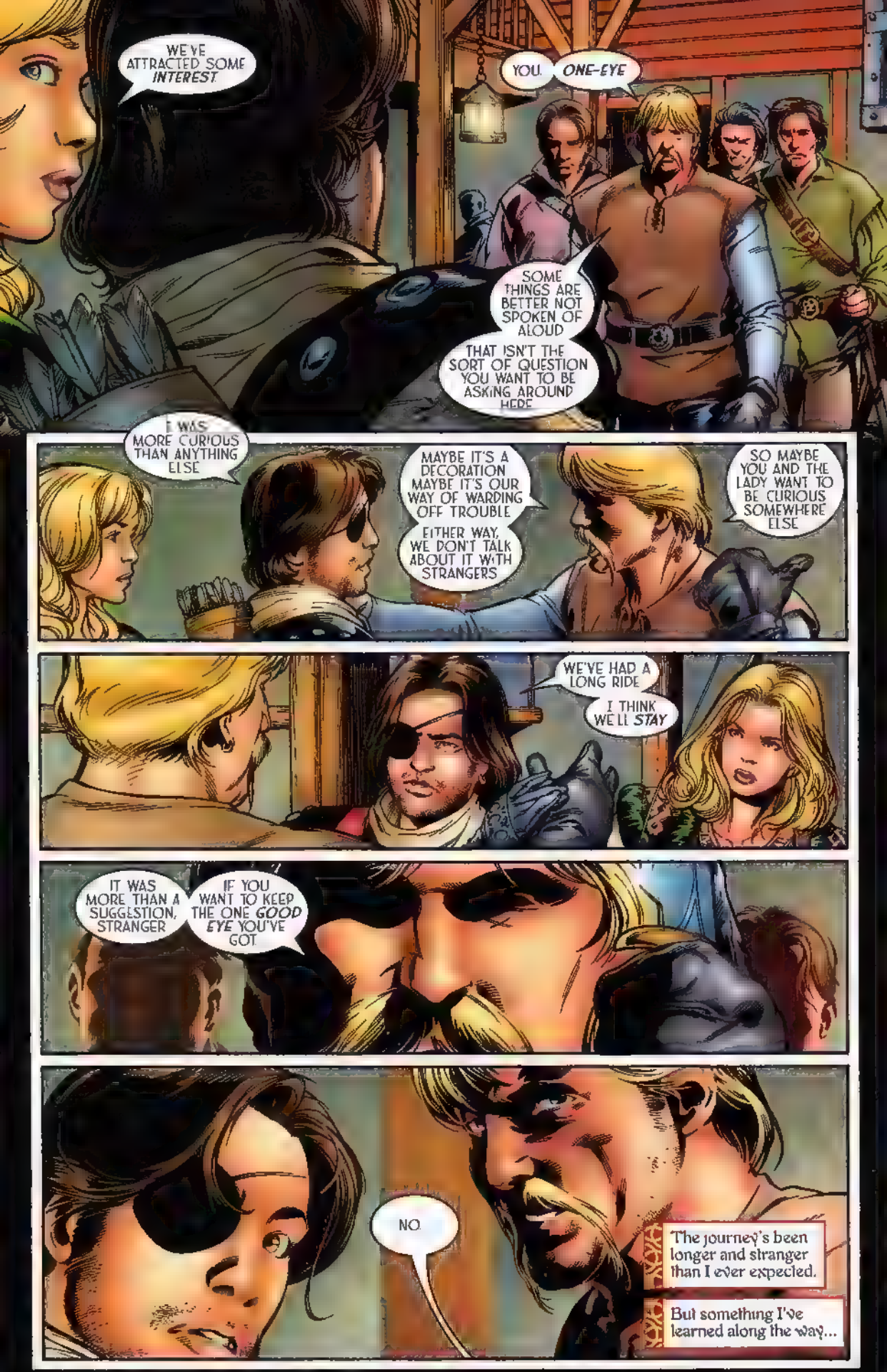
ALE, BARKEEP

Nnf

HEY

UP THERE LOOKS LIKE WE ARE IN THE RIGHT PLACE

AT LEAST WE KNOW HOW IT GOT ITS NAME
SO WHAT'S THE STORY WITH THAT THING UP THERE? IT DIDN'T REALLY COME FROM A DRAGON, DID IT?
IT'S NOTHING JUST A DECORATION
Oh, COME ON, THERE MUST BE A STORY
MAYBE YOU DON'T WANT TO DRINK HERE AFTER ALL.
WHAT?
WHAT'D I SAY?
GARETH
HEY, WHAT ABOUT MY DRINK?
YOU EVER HEAR OF FRIENDLY SERV—
GARETH
Huh?


WE'VE ATTRACTED SOME INTEREST
YOU, ONE-EYE
SOME THINGS ARE BETTER NOT SPOKEN OF ALOUD
THAT ISN'T THE SORT OF QUESTION YOU WANT TO BE ASKING AROUND HERE
I WAS MORE CURIOUS THAN ANYTHING ELSE
MAYBE IT'S A DECORATION MAYBE IT'S OUR WAY OF WARDING OFF TROUBLE
EITHER WAY, WE DON'T TALK ABOUT IT WITH STRANGERS
SO MAYBE YOU AND THE LADY WANT TO BE CURIOUS SOMEWHERE ELSE
WE'VE HAD A LONG RIDE
I THINK WE'LL STAY
IT WAS MORE THAN A SUGGESTION, STRANGER
IF YOU WANT TO KEEP THE ONE GOOD EYE YOU'VE GOT
NO
The journey's been longer and stranger than I ever expected.
But something I've learned along the way...

..I'LL TELL THEM WHAT THEY WANT TO KNOW
..you find allies in the places you'd least expect

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Mordath

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Swearing vengeance, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments at the behest of a mysterious and apparently magical woman calling herself Neven. Armed with Ayden's legendary bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn has dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

Arwyn and Gareth have remained in the land of Middelyn, seeking a Fragment rumored to be part of a dragon's treasure board. They found the locals at a roadside inn to be less than friendly.

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I've been in one or two tavern brawls before.
REALLY, I'M NOT GOING TO WARN YOU AGAIN

Well, more than one or two tavern brawls.

GNFF!

And if there's a recurring theme

NNGF!

...it's that there's usually a woman involved

Arwyn and I arrived at a roadside inn looking for two things:

KRAK

UFF!

A decent night's sleep, and stories about a dragon that's supposed to prowl this end of Middelyn

Nobody was very talkative until the brunette volunteered

ANYBODY ELSE WANT SOME?

ANYBODY?

DON'T ALL ANSWER AT ONCE

Then the locals got a little surly

GET 'IM!
WHAK
NNG!
We were interested in the dragon...
...and I have to admit I didn't believe such a thing actually existed..
..because the dragon's treasure hoard was rumored to contain one of the Five Fragments of Ayden's fatal arrow.

At that point we hadn't found any of the Fragments, which were the object of the quest we'd undertaken
Reuniting the Fragments would summon Ayden back to the Five Lands
COME ON, BIG FELLA

And Ayden would oppose Mordaith.
Or so the story went
UP AND OVER.

Truthfully, I'm just along for the ride. It was always more Arwyn's quest than mine

But she got tossed out a window fairly early on.
PWHH!

If Arwyn had done the smart thing she would've hopped on her horse and headed in the other direction
OOF!
IF YOU GUYS DON'T STOP, I'M REALLY GONNA GET MAD
HOLD HIM!
I'M TRYING!
I'm so glad she didn't do the smart thing
FWOOM
LOOK
I'M NOT TELLING YOU WHAT TO DO BECAUSE I'M ONLY A GUEST HERE

SO JUST CONSIDER THIS ADVICE
YOU MIGHT WANT TO THINK ABOUT LETTING HIM GO.
I know I wouldn't want to be on Arwyn's bad side.
And she likes me
Most of the time

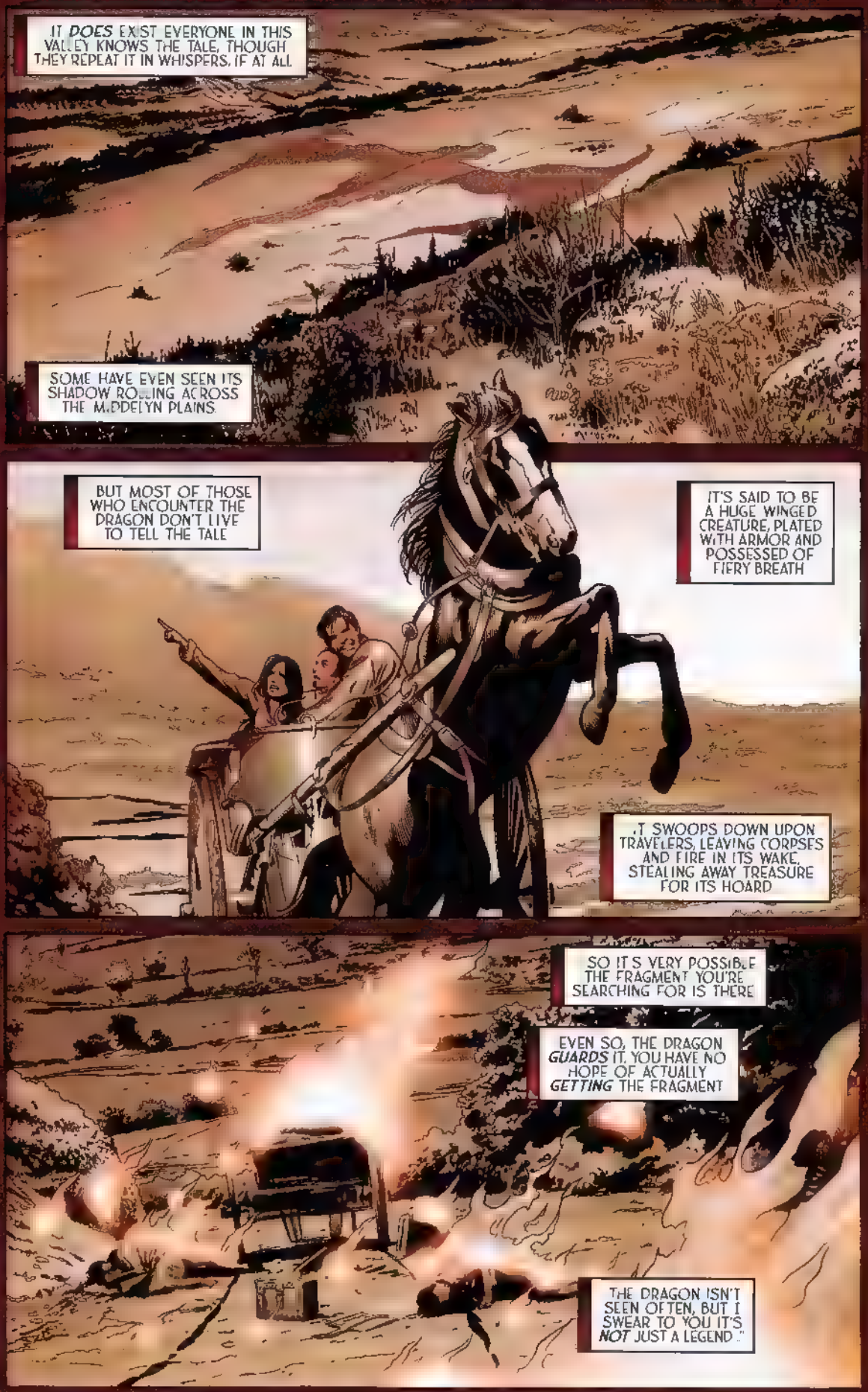
SORRY, FELLAS
LOOKS LIKE I CAN'T PLAY WITH YOU ANYMORE.
YOU'D BETTER TAG ALONG WITH US.
I DON'T THINK IT'S EXACTLY *SAFE* FOR YOU TO STICK AROUND HERE
I THINK YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT
TEMPTED TO LEAVE ME BEHIND AFTER THEY TOSSED YOU OUT THE WINDOW?
ONLY BRIEFLY
I'M *FLATTERED* SO HOW 'BOUT WE LEAVE BEFORE THEY DECIDE YOUR BOW'S NOT ENOUGH TO KEEP THEM AT BAY
I'VE NEVER *SEEN* SUCH A WEAPON
IT'S A LONG STORY
MAYBE I'LL *TELL* IT TO YOU ONCE WE'RE AWAY FROM HERE
OUT THE *BACK* I BROUGHT THE HORSES AROUND

LET'S GO, KREEG NO ROOF OVER OUR HEADS TONIGHT
WUFF
BY THE WAY, I'M GARETH
SHE'S ARWYN
YOU ARE ?
GRATEFUL
MY NAME IS SHIARA
I FEEL VERY FORTUNATE TO HAVE MET YOU
GRRRR
AH, S HE
AL, RIGHT?
HE S FINE
HUSH, KREEG
HERE, YOU CAN DOUBLE UP WITH ME, SHIARA WE NEED TO BE GONE
NOW

NOT QUITE YET
BUT IT SHOULD BE READY SOON
IT SMELLS WONDERFUL I'M STARVING.
YOU'RE SO KIND TO HAVE TAKEN ME IN LIKE THIS THANK YOU.
BOTH OF YOU
LEAST WE COULD DO, ISN'T IT?
YOU GOT YOURSELF INTO QUITE A BIT OF TROUBLE TRYING TO HELP US BACK AT THE SERPENT'S TOOTH
WHEN ARWYN HITS SOMETHING THERE TENDS NOT TO BE MUCH LEFT
I NEVER HEARD ANY COMPLAINTS WHEN I WAS AIMING AT TROLLS.
THERE'S NO SIGN OF THEM OUT THERE, BY THE WAY.
MAYBE THEY HAVEN'T PICKED UP OUR TRAIL AGAIN
YOU WANT TO BE THANKFUL FOR SOMETHING
BE THANKFUL I'VE FINALLY GOT A BOW OF MY OWN AND I WAS THE ONE WHO WENT HUNTING FOR DINNER

YOU HAVE TROLLS FOLLOWING YOU?
DOES IT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOUR BOW?
I DID SAY I'D TELL YOU THE STORY, DIDN'T I?
IT'S AYDEN'S BOW, THE BOW HE USED TO SLAY MORDATH
AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT I WAS TOLD, AND I'VE SEEN NOTHING TO MAKE ME DOUBT IT
THE BOW WAS GIVEN TO ME BY SOMEONE WHO WANTS ME TO GATHER THE FIVE FRAGMENTS AND BRING ABOUT MORDATH'S DOWNFALL
I SWORE I'D DESTROY MORDATH BECAUSE HE'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS OF MY HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER, FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF MY ENTIRE CITY
I TRIED TO KILL HIM IN HIS CASTLE, BUT I FAILED THAT'S WHERE I MET GARETH
MORDATH SET A DETACHMENT OF TROLLS ON OUR TRAIL AFTER WE ESCAPED FROM HIS CASTLE. WE LOST THEM ONCE
BUT TROLLS ARE NOTHING IF NOT TENACIOUS, ESPECIALLY WITH MORDATH DIRECTING THEM. I EXPECT THEY'RE STILL SEARCHING FOR US.
GARETH AND I ARE HERE TO FIND THE FIRST OF THE FRAGMENTS. IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE PART OF THE DRAGON'S TREASURE HOARD
THOUGH I GUESS YOU'D PROBABLY KNOW MORE ABOUT THAT

I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR FAMILY
IT MUST BE TERRIBLE, SUDDENLY BE,NG ALONE LIKE THAT
IT S
SO THIS S TRULY AYDEN S BOW? IT MUST BE
ALMOST PRICELESS
RRRRR
EASY, THERE
DON T WANT TO LOSE ANY OF THOSE FINGERS
I GUESS SOMET MES ANIMALS JUST DON T TAKE A LIKING TO CERTAIN PEOPLE
NOW IT'S YOUR TURN
SORRY?
YOUR TURN TO DO WHAT YOU SAID YOU'D DO TELL US WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE DRAGON
WHICH GARETH STILL DOESN'T BEL EVE EXISTS
WHICH GARETH, AS HE S SO FOND OF POINT,NG OUT DOESN T BELIEVE EXISTS
BELIEVE ME.


IT *DOES* EXIST. EVERYONE IN THIS VALLEY KNOWS THE TALE, THOUGH THEY REPEAT IT IN WHISPERS, IF AT ALL.
SOME HAVE EVEN SEEN ITS SHADOW ROLLING ACROSS THE MIDDELYN PLAINS.
BUT MOST OF THOSE WHO ENCOUNTER THE DRAGON DON'T LIVE TO TELL THE TALE.
IT'S SAID TO BE A HUGE WINGED CREATURE, PLATED WITH ARMOR AND POSSESSED OF FIERY BREATH.
IT SWOOPS DOWN UPON TRAVELERS, LEAVING CORPSES AND FIRE IN ITS WAKE, STEALING AWAY TREASURE FOR ITS HOARD.
SO IT'S VERY POSSIBLE THE FRAGMENT YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR IS THERE.
EVEN SO, THE DRAGON *GUARDS* IT. YOU HAVE NO HOPE OF ACTUALLY *GETTING* THE FRAGMENT.
THE DRAGON ISN'T SEEN OFTEN, BUT I SWEAR TO YOU IT'S *NOT* JUST A LEGEND."

IT'S AS *REAL* AS I AM
THE DRAGON'S LAIR
OR AT LEAST WHERE THE LAIR IS *RUMORED* TO BE
IS A DAY'S RIDE AWAY HIDDEN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE FAYERN GORGE I *CAN* LEAD YOU THERE
THOUGH I HAVE TO WARN YOU NO ONE GOES *WILLINGLY* TO THAT PLACE
WE'RE GRATEFUL FOR ANY GUIDANCE YOU CAN GIVE US
AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERN, BUT I THINK WE'LL BE ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES
ESPECIALLY SINCE THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A DRAGON *NO OFFENSE,* SHARA
DOUBT ME ALL YOU LIKE *YOU'LL SEE*
I DON'T THINK I *WILL,* BUT I'VE BEEN WRONG BEFORE
THE FOOD MUST BE READY BY NOW WE'D BETTER EAT AND TURN IN
WE SHOULD BE ON THE ROAD BY DAWN

Middelyn is the largest of the Five Lands, bordered by Grinbor in the east, Skarnhime to the north and Ankhara to the south. To the west stretches the sea
Man is the domunant species in Middelyn. The monarchy ruled for centuries, peacefully for the most part, until Mordath came.
DOWN THERE

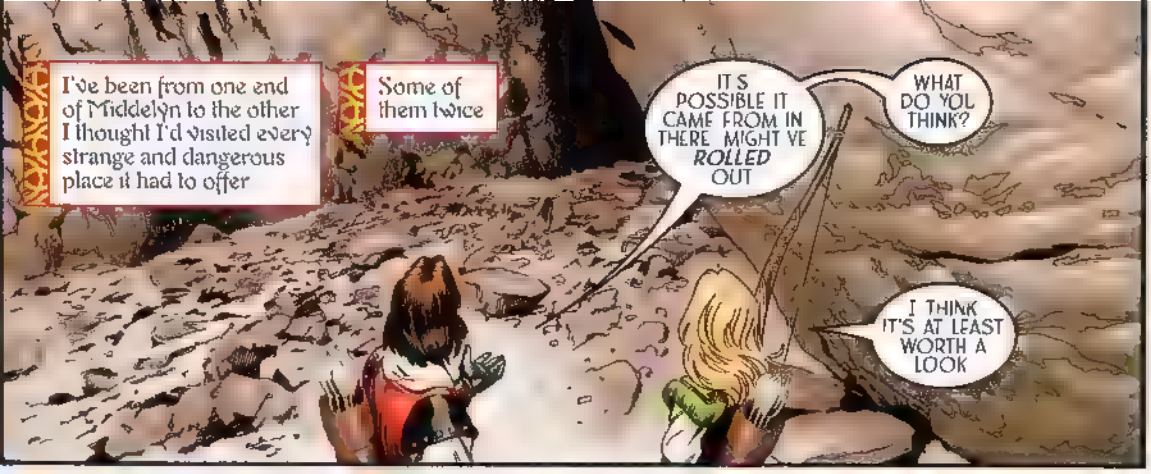
It's the most beautiful of the Five Lands, green plains and rolling hills cut by wide rivers.
THE DRAGON SUPPOSEDLY DENS IN THE CATACOMBS ON THE CANYON FLOOR

I'LL STAY HERE I HAVE NO INTENTION OF LOWERING MYSELF INTO A DRAGON'S LAIR
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO SAY IT

THERE IS NO DRAGON
BUT SUIT YOURSELF YOU CAN STAY HERE WITH KREEG. SINCE YOU TWO GET ALONG SO FAMOUSLY
Though, of course, I might be biased. I was born here

SERIOUSLY, YOU'LL BE FINE HERE ON YOUR OWN FOR A LITTLE WHILE
I'LL COME BACK AND SEE YOU SOON
YES..
SEE YOU SOON
AM I GOING TO BE DOING THIS BY MYSELF?
NO
NO?
NO, JUST I'LL BE RIGHT THERE
YOU KNOW, I'VE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT SOMETHING
I'M NOT COMPLAINING, BUT WHY DO YOU THINK NEVEN GAVE YOU THE BOW? YOU AND NOT ME, I MEAN
YOU'RE GOOD WITH IT, BUT I'M THE ONE WITH THE REPUTATION, RIGHT?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND MOST THINGS ABOUT NEVEN THAT'S ONE OF THEM
SHE WANTS ME TO HAVE IT I DON'T KNOW WHY SHE THINKS I'M A BETTER CHOICE THAN YOU.
AND YOU KNOW WHAT SHE'D SAY IF YOU ASKED HER
YEAH.
"I'VE REVEALED ALL I CAN, THERE'S A LARGER PLAN AT WORK"
I HEARD IT TOO

WELL YOU SEE A DRAGON? I DON'T SEE A DRAGON
I DON'T EVEN SEE DRAGON DROPPINGS.
WE'LL SPLIT UP AND HAVE A LOOK AROUND
BUT MAYBE SHE WAS LYING TO US.
IT COULD'VE ALL BEEN A PLOY TO LEAD US HERE AND STEAL OUR HORSES AND GEAR WHILE WE'RE DOWN IN THE GORGE
DRAGON MY BUTT
WAIT
WHAT'S THAT?
HERE BETWEEN THESE ROCKS.
ARWYN? MAYBE SHE WASN'T LYING TO US.
LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THIS THING YOU COULD CHOKE A HORSE WITH IT AND HAVE ENOUGH LEFT OVER FOR A PONY


I've been from one end of Middelyn to the other I thought I'd visited every strange and dangerous place it had to offer
Some of them twice
IT'S POSSIBLE IT CAME FROM IN THERE MIGHT'VE *ROLLED* OUT
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I THINK IT'S AT LEAST WORTH A LOOK

The Colossus of Dorne, Torning Forest, the majesty of the royal city at Iseaumon.
...which doesn't exist anymore because Mordath had it put to the torch, along with the king and queen.
I'LL TELL YOU ONE THING. THIS IS A TIGHT ENOUGH SQUEEZE THAT NO DRAGON IS GETTING IN OR OUT *THIS WAY*
NOT UNLESS IT'S A VERY *SMALL* ONE

Hmf
LITTLE BARREN FOR A TREASURE HOARD, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?
I THINK IT'S TIME TO ADMIT WE'VE BEEN HAD. THERE'S NO DRAGON *AND* NO TREASURE
AND NO FRAGMENT

HANG ON, DO YOU SEE *THESE*? MAYBE –
THAT'S NOTHING

NOTHING?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN THAT'S *NOTHING*?
But just when I'd convinced myself I'd seen it all...

I MEAN...
...THAT'S NOTHING.
IT'S HERE
IT'S REALLY *HERE*
HAH!
CAN YOU *BELIEVE* THIS, ARWYN?!
WE'LL LIVE LIKE KINGS! *BETTER* THAN KINGS!
HOW ARE WE EVER GOING TO FIND ONE PIECE OF AN *ARROW* IN ALL THIS?
I WON'T MIND LOOKING A BIT
I *TOLD* YOU THERE WAS NO DRAGON, DIDN'T I? A BEAST THAT SIZE, IT'S *IMPOSSIBLE*. YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS
I CAN ALMOST *GUARANTEE* ALL THIS BELONGS TO HIGHWAYMEN. IT MAKES SENSE, DOESN'T IT? THEY ROB TRAVELERS AND SPREAD STORIES ABOUT A DRAGON
THEN THEY SAY THE DRAGON LIVES WHERE THEY'VE STASHED THE TREASURE SO NO ONE GETS CURIOUS. THAT'S *GOT* TO BE WHAT—

I TAKE BACK EVERYTH NG I SAID

REMIND ME NEVER TO LISTEN TO YOU IN THE FUTURE
IF THERE *IS* A FUTURE
I'M THINKING YOUR BOW WOULD COME IN HANDY RIGHT ABOUT NOW
I'M THINKING THE SAME TH–
WHUMP
HNF!
THIS IS GOING TO BE ONE SHORT QUEST

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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Mordath

Shiara

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Now Mordath has risen from his tomb. Aided by a sigil that allows him to create and command fire, Mordath has again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments at the behest of a mysterious and apparently magical woman calling herself Neven. Armed with Ayden's legendary bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn has dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

Arwyn and Gareth began their quest in the land of Middelyn, led to a dragon's treasure hoard by a woman named Shiara. There they found not only the treasure, but the dragon as well.

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NEERA?
HELLO MAMA
NEERA!
I'M SO GLAD TO SEE YOU! I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!
WHAT ABOUT YOUR FATHER? IS HE HERE TOO?
HE'S HERE MAMA BOTH OF US ARE ALWAYS HERE

I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS PLACE IS SO BEAUTIFUL. BUT...WHAT *IS* IT?
HOW DID I *GET* HERE?
YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT *THAT,* MAMA
ALL THAT MATTERS IS YOU'RE *HERE.*
AND I'M GLAD, BECAUSE I HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU.
SOMETHING TO *TELL ME?*
YOU NEED TO LOOK INSIDE THE FLOWERS
WILL YOU REMEMBER THAT, MAMA? LOOK INSIDE THE *FLOWERS.*
THAT'S ALL
WAIT, YOU CAN'T *GO*...
GOODBYE, MAMA
NEERA, *PLEASE,* DON'T LEAVE ME...

ARWYN!

ARWYN, WE HAVE A *PROBLEM* HERE

HROARR

A *BIG* PROBLEM!

CHANK

Well, what do you want me to say?

WHY CAN I *NEVER* KEEP A SWORD IN ONE PIECE?

No, I didn't believe there was a dragon.

SINCE ARWYN'S NOT *USING* THIS AT THE MOMENT

And yes, there really was one. Happy?

YOUR TURN TO BE SURPRISED DRAGON

See, I can admit when I'm wrong

It just doesn't happen very often.

SPAK
We've since come to understand, or at least accept, why Ayden's bow only works for Arwyn.
Which goes a long way to explaining why it was given to her and not me
I M SSED
BUT I NEVER MISS
AND WHY NO EXPLOSION?
At the time, though...
UFF!
...it wasn't a lesson I was terribly enthused about learning
COME ON, GIVE ME SOMETHING HERE
I'M NOT GOING TO LAST VERY LONG TOSSING COINS AT IT

THIS LOOKS A LITTLE MORE PROMISING
We also found out how the dragon actually got into the cavern when Arwyn and I were barely able to squeeze through the passageway
The lake was fed by an underground river that surfaced leagues away
The front door was big enough
EVEN IF IT IS LIKE PRICKING A HORSE WITH A TOOTHPICK
.. she just got wet every time she used it
ARRR-PARR!
YOU STING ME, LITTLE MAN!

IT
TALKS.
I HAVE BEEN ALIVE FOR CENTURIES, LITTLE MAN, AND I HAVE RARELY BEEN HURT.
BUT YOU HURT ME.
TREASURE BE DAMNED..
...YOU'RE GOING TO BURN!
TALKS AND BREATHES FIRE
BETTER AND BETTER
WHOOSH

LITTLE MAN?
WHERE HAVE YOU GONE?
THAT WAS A BIT CLOSE THANK YOU
COME OUT, COME OUT, GARETH
I was more concerned with how I could avoid being burned alive.
But I suppose if I'd stopped to ponder how the dragon could be calling me by name...
..I might have put the pieces together a little sooner
HRRROOOOL
Or not
That kind of conclusion isn't really a natural leap, is it?
SPAASH

SO MAYBE *THIS* SWORD'S A KEEPER
START CALL NG ME DRAGON-S.AYER
Ooh

Mmnn
DON'T
LEAVE ME
NEERA
FLOWERS?
LOOK IN THE FLOWERS.
GARETH?
GARETH, I FOUND THE—
WAIT
WHERE'S THE DRAGON?
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS.
IN FACT, I DON'T BELIEVE IT AND I SAW IT HAPPEN

BUT *THAT'S* THE DRAGON

THAT'S *SHIARA* I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW DID *SHE* GET DOWN HERE?

I'M TELLING YOU, ARWYN, I *WOUNDED* THE DRAGON AND IT TURNED INTO *HER*, RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME.

AND YOUR BOW *STINKS*. I COU..DN'T HIT THE OCEAN FROM THE BEACH WITH IT.

BY THE WAY

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

I'M FINE *BETTER* THAN FINE

GARETH, I FOUND IT

I FOUND THE *FRAGMENT*

I HAD A *DREAM* OR A *VISION*. OR

I REALLY DON'T KNOW *WHAT* I HAD BUT MY DAUGHTER TOLD ME WHERE TO LOOK

YOUR *DAUGHTER?*

BUT HOW COULD THAT—

YOU...

WHAT DID YOU *DO* TO ME?
To be perfectly honest, that's not the first time I've had a naked woman ask me that.
But in an entirely different context
And with a good deal more . admiration...involved
DON'T DO ANYTHING *SUDDEN*, LIKE TURN INTO A GIANT MONSTER
YOU'VE GOT A PRETTY
FACE
BUT DON'T COUNT ON *THAT* SAVING YOU.
NOW, WHAT *ARE* YOU, ANYWAY?
I've had worse surprises from women, but that was right up there.
I was a lot fonder of the green-eyed brunette than the green-eyed monstrosity.

Apparently the wound was enough of a shock to her system that it changed her back.
I'M JUST A GIRL YOU MET IN A TAVERN
THAT'S THE KIND OF ANSWER THAT'LL GET YOU HURT
I'D WAGER I CAN HAVE TWO FEET OF THIS BLADE STICKING OUT YOUR BACK BEFORE YOU SPROUT WINGS AND START BREATHING FIRE
SO MIND YOUR TONGUE
WHAT DID YOU DO WITH MY DOG?
NOTHING. HE'S SAFE WITH THE HORSES
AND SINCE YOU'RE SO INSISTENT, I'M EXACTLY WHAT I APPEAR TO BE
A DRAGON WHO CAN TAKE ON THE APPEARANCE OF A WOMAN OR, PERHAPS, A WOMAN WHO CAN TAKE ON THE APPEARANCE OF A DRAGON
WHY DON'T WE CONSIDER THAT MY SECRET?
PUTTING ASIDE THE MYRIAD QUESTIONS I HAVE ABOUT HOW THAT'S EVEN POSSIBLE
LET'S GET TO THE OBVIOUS. WHY BRING US HERE? WHY LEAD US TO YOUR TREASURE?
FOR THAT
IF IT'S WHAT YOU SAY IT IS, IT'S THE RAREST OF ALL TREASURES

A BOW DOESN'T STRIKE ME AS ESPECIALLY USEFUL TO A DRAGON
LOOK AROUND YOU DRAGONS COVET.
IT IS OUR NATURE
WHEN I APPROACHED YOU AT THE INN I THOUGHT AT BEST YOU MIGHT ADD A FEW BAUBLES TO MY HOARD. BUT THEN I SAW YOU USE THE BOW
SO THE GREAT BEAST IS NOTHING MORE THAN A PETTY THIEF
YOU ASSUME THIS SHAPE AND LURE TRAVELERS TO THEIR DEATHS.
AND IT'S ALWAYS WORKED.
UNTIL NOW YOU WERE MORE RESILIENT THAN MOST OF MY GUESTS. YOU LIVED LONG ENOUGH TO FIND THAT
THIS?
WHY DID THIS HURT YOU WHEN MY OTHER BLADE JUST SHATTERED AGAINST YOUR HIDE?
WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT IT?
IT'S CALLED SERPENT'S BANE
IT WAS FORGED CENTURIES AGO, THE STEEL TEMPERED WITH DRAGON'S BLOOD
IT'S ESPECIALLY POTENT AGAINST MY KIND, AND MY KIND CANNOT DESTROY IT
IT CAME INTO MY POSSESSION AND I KEPT IT HERE, SAFE FROM HUMAN HANDS, UNTIL YOU FOUND IT
WELL THEN, I'VE GOT A SWORD
ARWYN, YOU'VE GOT WHAT YOU WANT
WHAT DO WE DO WITH HER?

I HAVE AN *OFFER*
THIS IS WHAT WE CAME FOR, THE FIRST OF THE FIVE FRAGMENTS. I TOLD YOU THE STORY
WHEN ALL FIVE FRAGMENTS ARE FOUND AND REUNITED, AYDEN WILL RETURN AND BRING ABOUT MORDATH'S DOWNFALL
FRANKLY, I DON'T CARE *HOW* MORDATH IS DESTROYED, ONLY THAT HE *IS*
AND SOMETHING AS *POWERFUL* AS A DRAGON MIGHT WELL BE ABLE TO PUT AN END TO HIM
YOU EXPECT *ME* TO CARE WHO RULES THE FIVE LANDS?
DO YOU THINK YOU'LL BE ABLE TO HIDE HERE FOREVER? EVENTUALLY MORDATH WILL TURN HIS ATTENT ON TO YOU
THIS IS A BATTLE YOU'LL BE FORCED TO FIGHT ONE DAY WHY NOT FIGHT IT WHEN *YOU* CHOOSE TO?
ARWYN, WHICH PART OF THIS ACTUALLY SOUNDS GOOD TO YOU?
WE CAN'T TRUST *HER!* SHE TRIED TO *KILL* US!
YOU SEEMED A GOOD DEAL MORE TRUSTING OF HER LAST NIGHT WHEN SHE WAS BATTING HER EYES AT YOU GARETH
WHAT ARE *YOU* WORRIED ABOUT? YOU'VE GOT THAT *SWORD* TO KEEP HER IN LINE
YOU NEED *ANOTHER* REASON, SHIARA? HOW'S *THIS?*
THE BOW IS *YOURS* WHEN THIS IS FINISHED THE BOW AND WHATEVER OF MORDATH'S TREASURE YOU WANT TO KEEP
DO WE HAVE A *BARGAIN?*
I'VE *NEVER* LIKED TO INVOLVE MYSELF IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN

BUT YES
FOR THE BOW, WE HAVE A BARGAIN
You can hardly blame Arwyn for grasping at what seemed to be a solution. The easy path is always the most tempting.
GOOD
MORDATH'S CASTLE LIES TO THE EAST NEAR THE BORDER OF MIDDELYN AND GRINBOR
CAN YOU TRANSPORT US THERE?
I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE ACTUALLY DOING THIS
This time I was the one saying the whole notion was a bad idea.
DO I LOOK LIKE A PACK ANIMAL?
ALL RIGHT THEN WE'LL GO BY HORSEBACK AND CUT ACROSS THE PLAINS RATHER THAN TAKING THE ROAD
YOU'LL COVER MORE GROUND THAN WE WILL
BUT WE'LL BE THERE. I WANT TO SEE WITH MY OWN EYES THAT MORDATH IS DEAD
Unfortunately, it turned out I was right.
OH, I THINK YOU CAN COUNT ON THAT

THEY CAN'T BE FAR AHEAD NOW, CAPTAIN
WE'RE CLOSING ON THEM.
ONCE THE HUMANS AT THE INN WERE PROPERLY MOTIVATED...
..THEY WERE MOST HAPPY TO TELL US THEY KNEW OF OUR QUARRY
WE'RE FORTUNATE TO HAVE PICKED UP THEIR TRAIL AGAIN
..AND WELL FOR US THAT WE DID. LORD MORDATH WON'T TOLERATE ANOTHER FAILURE ON OUR -
HOLD.
I HEAR..
SOMETHING.
EYES OF MORDATH!

STEADY!
I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH A BEAST, CAPTAIN BOHR! WHAT WAS IT?
A GREAT SERPENT, AS HAS NOT BEEN SEEN IN GRINBOR IN THREE LIFETIMES.
I'D COME TO THINK THEY WERE MORE FANCY THAN FACT
BUT WHY DID IT IGNORE US, CAPTAIN? WHERE DOES IT GO?
WE ARE OBVIOUSLY NOT ITS PREY. IT TRAVELS EAST..
TOWARD MORDATH'S CASTLE.

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Arwyn and Gareth began their quest in the land of Middelyn, led to a dragon's treasure hoard by a woman named Shiara. While Arwyn discovered the Fragment, Gareth discovered Shiara was, in fact, the dragon in disguise. An uneasy bargain was struck, and Shiara agreed to destroy Mordath in return for Ayden's bow.

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THIS IS WHAT I MISS.
...THE BOUNTY OF MIDDELYN
EVEN THE HARVEST OF GRINBOR IS A FEAST COMPARED TO WHAT THOSE DAMNED ANKHARANS HAVE IN THEIR LARDER
THEY DON'T JUST LOOK LIKE BIRDS..
...THEY EAT LIKE THEM, TOO
ALMOST MAKES ME REGRET TAKING THE POST
SWEET.
YOU SEEM TO HAVE HAD NO TROUBLE ADAPTING TO THEIR FASHIONS, NETH.
IF YOU WOULD ALL GIVE ME YOUR ATTENTION...

... LORD MORDATH WILL SPEAK TO YOU NOW.

GOVERNORS

I AM PLEASED YOU WERE ALL ABLE TO ANSWER MY SUMMONS

KHEERA OF GRINBOR

TORNUD OF SKARNHIME

NETH OF ANKHARA

EEHN OF OUDUBAI

AND GHORM OF MIDDELYN

WELCOME

I ASSUME YOU FIND MY HOSPITALITY SATISFACTORY

THE *FRUIT*, IN PARTICULAR, IS DELICIOUS, MY LORD
I WOULDN'T *KNOW*
Oh.
Oh.
I'VE GATHERED YOU SO THAT WE MIGHT DISCUSS THE *GOVERNANCE* OF THE FIVE LANDS
I WAITED THREE CENTURIES TO PUT THEM UNDER MY HEEL, AND NOW MY BANNER IS *EVERYWHERE*, AS FAR AS THE FIVE LANDS STRETCH
I'VE ENTRUSTED EACH OF *YOU* WITH THE SUPERVISION OF ONE OF THE FIVE RACES
AND I ASK VERY LITTLE OF YOU OTHER THAN YOUR *OBEDIENCE*, AND THAT YOU MAINTAIN *ORDER* IN YOUR TERRITORIES

MOST OF YOU HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN THIS
GRINBOR HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY STRONGHOLD, KHEERA. YOUR PEOPLE ARE THE SWORD WITH WHICH MY RULE WAS CREATED AND GRINBOR THE FORGE WHERE THAT SWORD WAS TEMPERED
TORNUD, WE EXPERIENCED GREAT HARDSHIP IN TAKING SKARNHIME, DID WE NOT?
YET NOW THAT IT IS OURS, YOU MAINTAIN AN IRON GRIP ON ITS FROZEN CITIES.
YOU PLEASE ME, BOTH OF YOU.
YOU, LEEHN, HAVE SOLVED THE DIFFICULTY OF RULING A NOMADIC PEOPLE
KEEP THEM SCATTERED ACROSS THE WASTES. KEEP THEIR TRIBES AT WAR WITH ONE ANOTHER AND THEY WILL NEVER AGAIN UNITE AGAINST US.
AND TO YOU, GHORM, I GRANTED THE GREATEST PRIZE – MIDDELYN ITSELF
ONCE GERRINDOR FELL, THERE HAS BEEN HARDLY A WHISPER OF REBELLION AMONG THE HUMANS
YOU, TOO, HAVE PLEASED ME.
BUT IN ANKHARA
IN ANKHARA THE REBELS STILL GAIN GROUND
STILL THEY DEFY ME
I EVEN BROUGHT THE ONE CALLED HANUN BEFORE ME AND EXECUTED HIM MYSELF, HAD HIM HUNG FROM THE GATES AS AN EXAMPLE
AND EVEN WITH THIS LESSON, EVEN WHEN I DO YOUR JOB FOR YOU, NETH, YOU ARE UNABLE TO QUELL THE INSURRECTION
BUT..
...BUT, YOUR EMINENCE, I CAN EXPLAIN.
NO
NO. I'M AFRAID THE TIME FOR EXPLANATIONS IS LONG PASSED

THE ANKHARAN REBELLION HAS GAINED STRENGTH WHILE YOU DISTRACTED YOURSELF WITH PLEASURES
THE TITHES YOU SEND ME ARE ALWAYS LESS THAN YOUR DUE
GHH
YOU IGNORED YOUR DUTIES, NETH AND WORSE, YOU PRESUMED I WOULD NOT NOTICE
YOU DISAPPOINT ME
GHHAK
AND THAT I WILL NOT ALLOW
EEAGH!
FUMP

I TRUST THIS DISPLAY WAS NOT *LOST* ON ANY OF YOU?
NO, SIRE
NO
IT WAS WHAT THE FOOL *DESERVED*
GOOD
JUST TO BE CERTAIN, I WOULD LIKE THE REST OF YOU TO *DISPOSE* OF NETH'S BODY
THEN YOU MAY GO
HALK, SUMMON COMMANDER KOHT FROM THE FORTRESS AT ISEAUNON
INFORM HIM *HE* IS THE NEW GOVERNOR OF ANKHARA. HIS FIRST DUTY WILL BE TO PUT DOWN THIS REBELLION
AND PLEASE RELATE TO HIM THE FATE OF THE *FORMER* GOVERNOR OF ANKHARA
OF COURSE, LORD

CONQUERING THE FIVE LANDS PROVED TO BE THE EASIER TASK, HALK
GOVERNING THEM REQUIRES FAR MORE OF MY ATTENTION THAN I EXPECTED
IT'S EASIER TO IMPOSE MY WILL FROM A BATTLEFIELD THAN A -
DO YOU
HEAR SOMETHING?

I S STARTED
I'LL ASK AGAIN. YOU'RE *SURE* THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT TO DO?
WE'LL PROBABLY MAKE JUST AS MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE IF WE STAY HERE AND LEAVE IT ALL IN SHIARAS.
WELL, NOT *HANDS*, BUT YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN
DO YOU KNOW WHAT I *SEE* EVERY TIME I CLOSE MY EYES, GARETH?
MY HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER, DEAD AND STARING UP AT ME
THE ONLY WAY I'LL EVER GET THOSE IMAGES OUT OF MY MIND IS TO SEE *MORDATH* DEAD
I THOUGHT THE *QUEST* WAS THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN
BUT A *BETTER* OPTION PRESENTED ITSELF
EVEN IF A THOUSAND TROLLS ARE IN OUR WAY
WHICH THEY *ARE*, ARWYN
I'M GOING TO SEE WITH MY OWN EYES THAT MORDATH HAS BEEN DESTROYED
AND IF HE STILL *LIVES*...
I'LL FINISH HIM *MYSELF*

YOU STAY HERE IF YOU WANT KREEG AND I ARE GOING
WHAT, AND NOT HAVE A CHANCE TO VISIT ALL THOSE PLACES WE ALMOST GOT KILLED THE LAST TIME?
WOULDN T MISS IT
Why me?

I don't mean that in an "Oh, woe is me" way, I mean...
...why am I doing this?
DAHR...
...ISN'T THAT *YOU* I SEE DOWN BY THE KITCHENS SO OFTEN? YOU MUST HAVE QUITE A HEARTY APPETITE...
...OF *ONE SORT* OR ANOTHER
THE KITCHENS
THAT'S WHERE THAT *SCULLERY WENCH* WORKS, ISN'T IT?
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU MEAN
HE MEANS THE *FAT* ONE
HA!
THAT ONE? THAT ONE'S MORE WOMAN THAN YOU CAN HANDLE, DAHR!
I'D WAGER THAT ONE'S MORE WOMAN THAN HE CAN GET HIS *ARMS AROUND!*
I'LL WAGER I CAN GET MY *HANDS* AROUND YOUR—
Why do I throw myself at an evil tyrant's fortress, manned by thousands of his troops..
...all of whom would gladly cut my throat just to place bets on how long it would take me to bleed to death.
ROUSE YOURSELVES!

GATHER YOUR ARMS, YOU DULLARDS!
THE CASTLE IS UNDER ATTACK!
For the longest time I wasn't really certain
I'd tell people this was Arwyn's quest, that I was just along for the ride.
And that was true
TO ARMS!
ALL OF YOU, TO ARMS!
EVERY TROLL TO THE WALLS!
BUT WHO ATTACKS US?
WHO?
MOVE!
UP TO THE PARAPETS!
It is Arwyn's quest.
She's the one who's sworn vengeance.
And me falling in with her was more accident than anything else.

There's nothing personal in this for me. At least there wasn't when we started
GYAAHH!
WHAT COULD DO THAT?
So why am I tagging along? It's certainly not the safest course I could've chosen
I KNOW NOT WHAT MANNER OF FOE IS MAD ENOUGH TO ATTACK OUR LORD IN HIS OWN FORTRESS.
GHHuu
...BUT THEY WON'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO REGRET IT!
I need both hands to count the times I've almost died, and we're not finished yet
I've learned from past experience, you stand close enough to a fire.
EYES OF MORDATH!

..sooner or later you're bound to get burned

DON'T STAND THERE LIKE *FOOLS!*

ANY BEAST CAN BE KILLED, NO MATTER ITS SIZE!

I used to tell myself that going with Arwyn was like virtually everything else that's happened in my life–
WE CAN'T KILL WHAT WE CAN'T REACH!
BRING THE CATAPULTS TO BEAR! TURN THEM INWARD FROM THE WALL!
No plan, not even much of a reason, like a fallen leaf carried along by a rushing stream
But I can look back now and see that wasn't it. There was a reason.
DEFEND THE CASTLE!
DEFEND OUR LORD MORDATH!
BUT WHERE IS MORDATH?
..one I wouldn't have admitted to myself, or believed if someone else had offered the opinion
PULL!
PULL FOR ALL YOU'RE WORTH, YOU DOGS!

READY!
HOLD!
HOLD UNTIL THE BEAST COMES WITHIN OUR SIGHTS...
Without being aware of it, I'd come to the conclusion it was time to do something useful with my life .
STEADY
instead of letting myself be that leaf
...AIM...
I'd spent most of my years doing things for no particular reason...
...AAGH!
KORM!
THUK
...going from one place to another, one adventure to another, serving myself more than anyone else.
Apparently I finally decided to do something for the best of reasons
LOOSE THE SHOT! LOOSE THE—
GAAH!
THUK

Gareth the bowman devoting himself to a noble cause
Who would've thought?
WATCH YOUR LEFT
GOT IT
GHNnn
WHO DARES?!

SORRY, THAT ONE GOT AWAY
HAVE YOU FOUND MORDATH?
IS HE *DEAD* YET SHIARA?
I CAN'T BE SURE.
...THESE DAMNABLE TROLLS ARE *NUISANCE ENOUGH* TO KEEP ME FROM GAINING THE CASTLE'S INTERIOR.
BUT HE'S MERELY A *MAN*.
I *WILL* DESTROY HIM.
AND I *WILL* HAVE THAT BOW OF YOURS FOR IT.
YOU'RE WELCOME TO IT ONCE MORDATH IS DEAD
THE BOW *AND* THE FRAGMENT, FOR ALL I CARE
BELIEVE ME, I'M *ALL FOR* KILLING MORDATH. SOUNDS LIKE A *PLAN*.
BUT SEEMS LIKE OUR NEW PARTNER UP THERE TENDS TO BE A LITTLE *INDISCRIMINATE*.
I DOUBT SHE GIVES A DAMN WHETHER YOU AND I GET *BURNED* OR BURIED UNDER WHAT'S GOING TO BE *LEFT* OF THIS CASTLE IN THE PROCESS.
YOU'VE HEARD THIS PART BEFORE – I DON'T *TRUST* HER
YOU DON'T *HAVE* TO
ALL I WANT IS *MORDATH*

YOU KNOW, ARWYN
GHRN
THUK
THIS IS WHERE WE STARTED
BEING BACK IN THIS CASTLE REMINDS ME OF HOW MUCH I HATE BEING IN THIS CASTLE!
GARETH, WHY CAN'T YOU BE MORE LIKE KREEG?
HRGH!
HE NEVER COMPLAINS AT ALL
ONLY BECAUSE THE DOG CAN'T TALK
HE CAN'T TALK RIGHT?
HERE
THAT'S MORDATH'S AIDE I SAW HIM WHEN I WAS HERE BEFORE
MNNH
HEY, GREENFACE! WHERE IS HE?
WHERE'S MORDATH?
NEVER MIND, WE'RE NOT GOING TO GET ANYTHING OUT OF HIM
IF THEY WERE TOGETHER WHEN THE RUBBLE FELL
MORDATH COULD BE UNDER HERE

→GHK←
ARWYN!
GRRROWL
YOU
.S TH S YOUR DOING? IS IT?
I SHOULD HAVE INCINERATED YOU WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE
→GHHH←
IF ANYONE'S GOING TO BURN, LITTLE MAN...

...IT'S
YOU.

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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Mordath

Shiara

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Ayden retreated to the solitude from which he'd come, but broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb. Aided by a sigil that allows him to create and command fire, Mordath has again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments at the behest of a mysterious and apparently magical woman calling herself Neven. Armed with Ayden's legendary bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn has dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

Arwyn and Gareth began their quest in the land of Middelyn, led to a dragon's treasure hoard by a woman named Shiara. While Arwyn discovered the Fragment, Gareth discovered Shiara was, in fact, the dragon in disguise. A bargain was struck, and Shiara agreed to destroy Mordath in return for Ayden's bow. The dragon unleashed fiery destruction upon Mordath's castle, but now confronts the tyrant himself.

Sojourn™ Vol. 1, Issue 11 JUNE 2002 FIRST PRINTING Published by CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. Office of publication: 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400 Oldsmar, Florida 34677
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WELL
TAK
THAT'S THE END OF THAT
I WISH IT COULD'VE TURNED OUT *DIFFERENTLY*, KREEG

And it was going so well for a little while

Talking Shara into destroying Mordath seemed like a fine enough idea.

To Arwyn, at least

But I don't think Arwyn figured on getting caught between the two of them

I was the one who was convinced the only thing that Shara wanted was to get her hands...

...paws?..

...on Ayden's bow..

...and that she wouldn't hesitate to burn us down right along with Mordath

ARWYN

DOWN!

UNN!

GARETH, WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?!*

MORDATH WOULD HAVE BEEN *KILLED!*

MAYBE.

AND SO WOULD *YOU*

CALL ME SENTIMENTAL BUT I'D RATHER KEEP *YOU* AROUND

AND HAVE *HIM* DEAD!

GH

The other thing we probably should've given a little more consideration to...
how do you kill something that's already died?
I WAS SLAIN ONCE
YOU THINK A LENGTH OF STEEL IS ENOUGH TO SLAY ME NOW?
YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND
ARE VERY MUCH CREATURES OF THE FLESH
I DON'T SUPPOSE WE COULD TALK ABOUT THIS
HWF?

YOUR WALLS WON'T KEEP ME FROM YOU, TYRANT!
DON'T MIND ME IF I TAKE THIS BACK.
ARWYN
WE NEED TO BE SOMEWHERE ELSE!
COME ON, LET'S GO!
WE'RE NOT DONE HERE

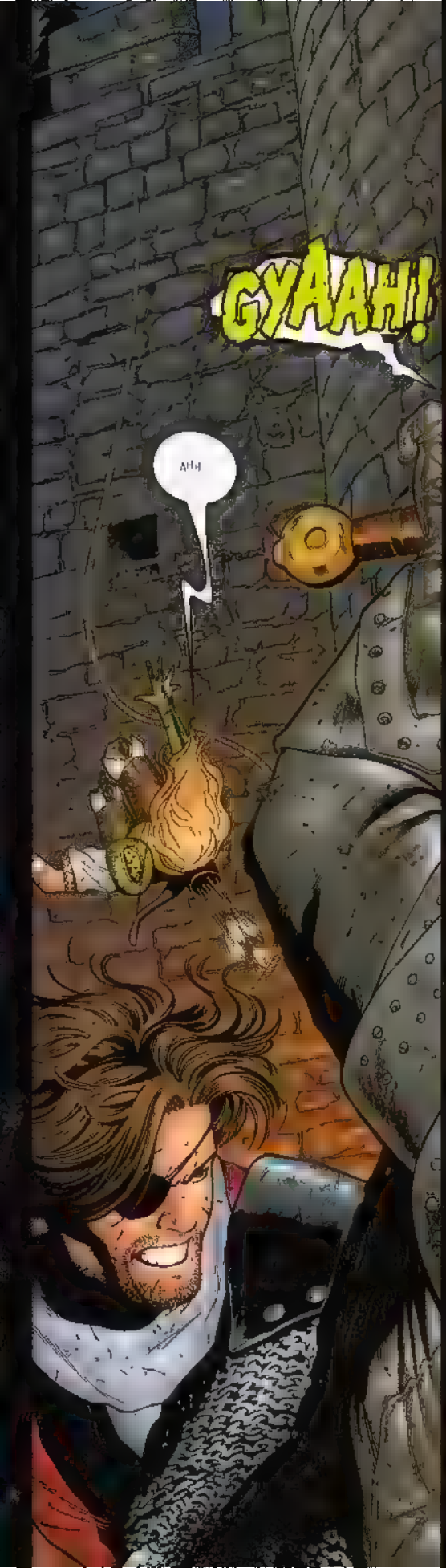
WE'RE GOING TO BE *WELL DONE* IN A MINUTE!
SHIARA *ALREADY* CAME CLOSE TO TORCHING US, I DON'T WANT TO STICK AROUND AND GIVE HER ANOTHER CHANCE
IT DOESN'T MATTER!
ONLY MAKING CERTAIN OF MORDATH'S DEATH MATTERS!
DIDN'T WE ALREADY *HAVE* THIS ARGUMENT?
WHAT AREN'T YOU GETTING? I JUST *RAMMED* A SWORD THROUGH HIS CHEST AND ALL HE DID WAS *LOOK* AT ME FUNNY!
YOU WANT TO HAVE A DEATH WISH, ARWYN, *THAT'S FINE* BUT I DON'T HAVE ONE AND I DOUBT *KREEG* DOES, EITHER
I'M NOT COUNTING ON NEVEN SHOWING UP AND WHISKING US AWAY IN THE NICK OF TIME THERE'S *NOTHING* MORE WE CAN DO HERE EXCEPT *DIE*
SO WHAT'S IT GOING TO *BE*, ARWYN?
WE... *GO*
WE... GO
THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO HEAR.
NOW LET'S GET *SCARCE* BEFORE MORE OF BALDY'S TROLLS SHOW UP TO DEFEND HIM
AS FAR AS MORDATH AND SHARA ARE CONCERNED
I'M PERFECTLY HAPPY TO LET THEM *INCINERATE* EACH OTHER

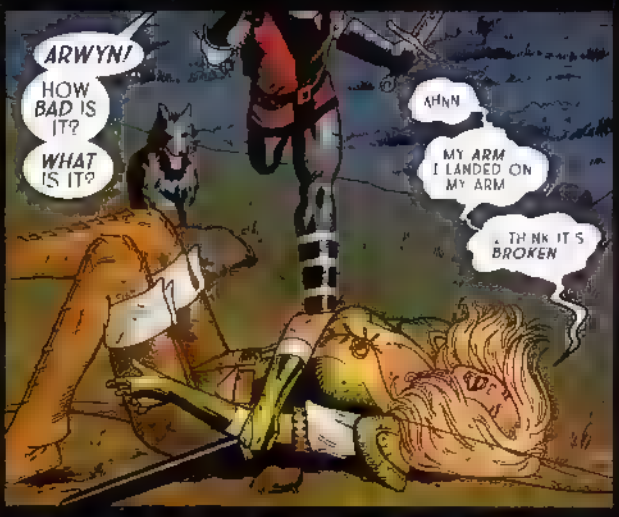
NOT THAT I DON'T APPRECIATE THE *NOSTALGIA* OF RUNNING AROUND THE CASTLE WHILE TROLLS TRY TO KILL US.
=HNF=
HRGH!
BUT WE REALLY NEED TO FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE
LOOK!
BEFORE ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE
SO MAYBE YOU WERE *RIGHT* ABOUT NEEDING TO LEAVE

I WAITED THREE CENTURIES TO CONQUER THE FIVE LANDS
AND FORFEITED MY HUMANITY TO DO SO
NO BEAST IS GOING TO TAKE WHAT I HAVE WON!
A BEAST?
YOU DARE CONSIDER ME A BEAST?
LONG AGO MY KIND DARKENED THE SKY, BUT OVER TIME WE FORGOT WHAT WE WERE AND BECAME OTHER THINGS.
EVEN SO, THERE WERE NEVER ANY CREATURES WHO COULD STAND AGAINST US. NOT THEN...
...NOT NOW!

THIS SHOULD REACH
AND IT'S A LOT QUICKER THAN MAKING OUR WAY BACK THROUGH THE CASTLE
THERE'S NOT GOING TO BE MUCH LEFT OF THIS PLACE BY THE TIME MORDATH AND SHIARA ARE DONE WITH EACH OTHER
HURRY UP
THE TROLLS ARE STARTING TO SNIFF US OUT
GHH!
THUK
I'LL GO FIRST AND CARRY THE DOG
WHY DO YOU GET TO CARRY KREEG?
DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY, BUT I THINK I'M A LITTLE STRONGER THAN YOU ARE
BUT HE'S MY DOG
HE'S YOUR HEAVY DOG ARWYN, WE CAN ARGUE LATER, I JUST WANT TO GET OUT OF HERE
FINE
C'MERE, BOY
OOMF
WHAT IN THE FIVE LANDS HAS SHE BEEN FEEDING YOU?

KREEG, STOP SQUIRMING I'M NOT GOING TO DROP YOU.
PROBABLY
NO ESCAPE FOR YOU, HUMAN!
CAREFUL WHERE YOU STEP, ARWYN
RRRR
I'VE GOT COMPANY DOWN HERE
KRANG
UP HERE, TOO
CHUNK


GYAAH!
AHH


ARWYN!
HOW BAD IS IT?
WHAT IS IT?
AHNN
MY ARM I LANDED ON MY ARM
I THINK IT'S BROKEN

I HATE TO TELL YOU THIS, BUT A ONE-ARMED ARCHER'S NOT LIKELY TO SCARE ANYBODY
YOU CAN WALK?
I CAN
I'VE TENDED TO WORSE IN THE PAST
I SHOULD BE ABLE TO SET IT

BUT NOT UNTIL WE'RE WELL AWAY FROM HERE

Here's something I've wondered more than a few times.
Does Arwyn have a death wish?
EEEEAA!
I mean, have I been following someone whose real goal is to get herself killed?
That's not to say she'd have known it, or be willing to admit it herself.
She throws herself into situations that have at least a fair chance of ending with her dead
Like entering Mordath's castle Willingly.
Twice
So ..is that a death wish?
Is Arwyn really just trying to end it all, and using this quest to do it?

You could understand it, certainly, after all she's lost
But I don't think so.
Maybe that was driving her at one point, early on, when the deaths of her husband and daughter were still near and raw
Not anymore, though.
I've been around enough who have truly had a death wish .
even helped a few fulfill that wish
. .and I've come to the conclusion Arwyn's past that
She s fought too long and hard for someone trying to commit suicide
I think she does have reasons to live
To preserve her family's memory. And to bring about Mordath's downfall..
. because she's the only one who can.

Still, even if Arwyn isn't trying to get herself killed

...it's not lost on me that sometimes that's exactly what happens to those around her

While others are left standing.

I CAN'T SEE HER ANYMORE
SHE'S NOT TAKING WING AGAIN
I THINK WE NEED TO ADMIT SHE'S NOT GOING TO, ARWYN
THIS IS MY FAULT I NEVER SHOULD'VE INVOLVED SHIARA IN THIS
NOW SHE'S DEAD AND MORDATH ISN'T
BECAUSE OF ME
WHY ARE YOU BLAMING YOURSELF?
YOU HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING IT WOULD END LIKE THIS
THAT RINGS A LITTLE FALSE COMING FROM YOU, DOESN'T IT, GARETH?
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID WE SHOULDN'T EVEN TRUST HER
AND I'D TELL YOU THE SAME THING AGAIN
I FULLY EXPECTED HER TO BETRAY US. MAYBE MORDATH KILLED HER BEFORE IT COULD HAPPEN
DOESN'T MATTER WE'RE LUCKY TO BE GETTING OUT OF THIS ALIVE
GROWF
RUFF RUFF
QUIET, KREEG!
KEEP THAT UP

KILL THEM!
AND YOU'LL LEAD THE TROLLS RIGHT TO US
MAYBE I WAS A LITTLE *PREMATURE* ABOUT GETTING OUT OF THIS ALIVE
I'M NOT GOING TO BE MUCH GOOD WITH *ONE ARM*, GARETH
LIKE I SAID, IT'D BE NICE IF *NEVEN* OR SOMEBODY SWOOPED IN AND SAVED US, BUT I'M NOT *COUNTING* ON IT
WE'LL TAKE AS MANY *WITH US* AS WE CAN!
YOU'VE *SLIPPED* FROM MY GRASP TOO OFTEN. BUT NOT AGAIN.
WE'VE RIDDEN *HARD* AFTER YOU, AND *THIS TIME* THERE'S NOWHERE TO GO!
WELL, *THIS* I WASN'T EXPECTING

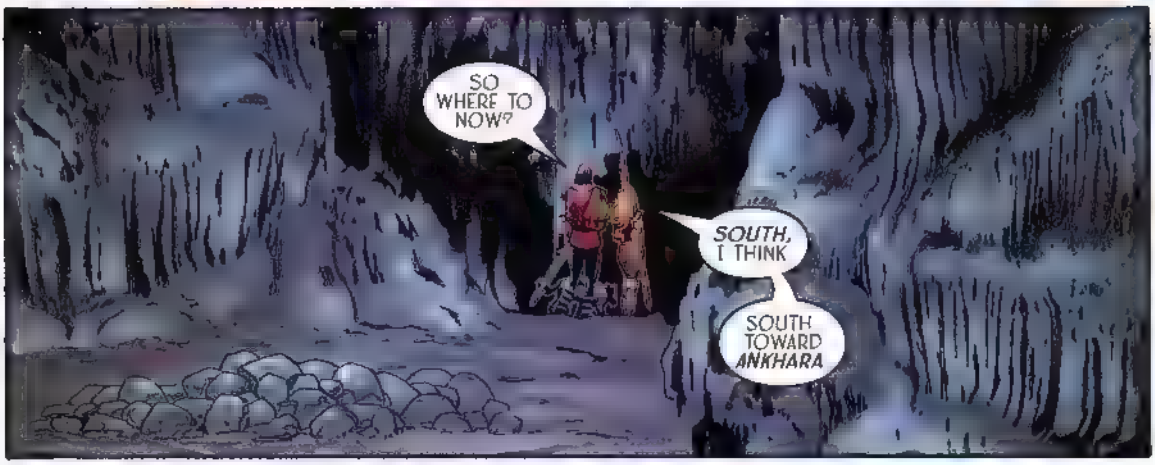
I FOUND YOU
NNF!
AGGH!
NO SQUIRMING KREEG OR I MIGHT REALLY DROP YOU.
IMPOSSIBLE

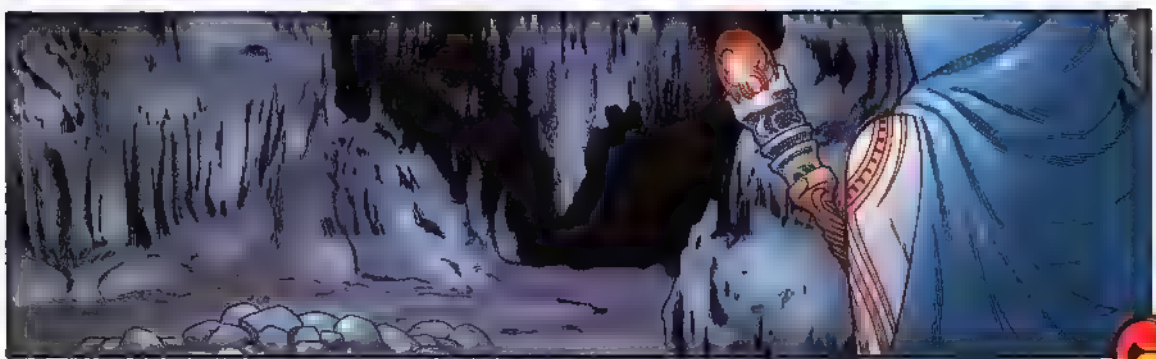
THAT'S A RIDE I'LL REMEMBER FOR A WHILE
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YOU MEAN
KOFF KOFF
YOU MEAN OTHER THAN HAVING A BROKEN ARM BEING WATERLOGGED AND GASPING FOR BREATH?
I'LL LIVE
BUT WHAT ABOUT HER?
I'M NOT SO SURE

GGHKH
LIE STILL, SHIARA
WE'LL DO WHAT WE CAN FOR YOU.
TRY TO HOLD ON
TOO LATE
I HELD MY OTHER FORM TO BRING YOU HERE
BUT I AM SPENT NOW
WHY?
WHY DID YOU COME BACK FOR US?
MY INJURIES. MY INJURIES ARE ENOUGH TO END MY LIFE I KNOW.
BUT MY DEATH MUST BE AVENGED
PROMISE ME
PROMISE
YOU HAVE OUR WORD
I WISH YOU LUCK
IN YOUR QUEST
I WISSSHH
SHE'S GONE

READY?
READY
I FILLED BOTH PACKS WITH TREASURE I CAN'T SEE US NEEDING *MORE* THAN THAT FOR A LONG TIME
IF WE DO, WE JUST COME BACK WE'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO KNOW WHERE THIS CAVE IS
OR WHAT'S *IN* IT
HOW ARE YOU *FEELING*?
I'M FEELING LIKE SHIARA'S *DEAD* BECAUSE OF ME BECAUSE I TRIED TO CIRCUMVENT THE QUEST
IT'S NOT A *GOOD* FEELING
IF IT'S MY *ARM* YOU'RE ASKING ABOUT
IT HURTS
I DON'T THINK I'M GOING TO BE USING *THIS* ANYTIME SOON

THAT MAKES TWO OF US THEN
AT LEAST WE SALVAGED SOMETHING OUT OF THIS DEBACLE
AT LEAST WE GOT THE FRAGMENT
ONE DOWN, FOUR TO GO


SO WHERE TO NOW?
SOUTH, I THINK
SOUTH TOWARD ANKHARA



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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Ayden

Neven

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Swearing vengeance, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments at the behest of a mysterious and apparently magical woman calling herself Neven. Armed with Ayden's legendary bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn has dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

Arwyn began her quest in the land of Middelyn where she discovered the first Fragment in a dragon's treasure hoard. A bargain was struck and the dragon agreed to attack Mordath's castle. But Mordath proved too powerful and slew the beast, while Arwyn and Gareth barely escaped with their lives.

Sojourn™ vol 1 Issue 12 JULY 2002 FIRST PRINTING Published by CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. Office of publication: 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400 Oldsmar Florida 34677
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I KNEW DEFEAT BEFORE
AND I ROSE FROM IT
WE WILL OVERCOME THIS
BEGIN THE REBUILDING OF MY FORTRESS AS SOON AS THE FIRES ARE QUENCHED, HALK
YES, MY LORD MORDATH
LORD.

...CAPTAIN BÖHR WISHES AN AUDIENCE

MY LORD MORDATH

I UNDERSTAND THE BLAME FOR THIS *RUIN*, FOR THE DEATHS OF SO MANY OF MY KIND, LIES WITH ME.
YOU CHARGED ME WITH THE CAPTURE OF THIS WOMAN...
...*ARWYN*...
...AND I FAILED YOU.
I AM PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE PUNISHMENT DUE ME
VERY WELL, CAPTAIN BOHR
ON YOUR *FEET*
SIRE?
AM I TO BLAME *YOU* BECAUSE I UNDERESTIMATED THE WOMAN?
THE ERROR WAS *MINE* I NEVER BELIEVED SHE WOULD BE RESOURCEFUL ENOUGH TO AVOID CAPTURE MUCH LESS RAIN THIS DESTRUCTION DOWN UPON ME
I ALLOWED THIS TO HAPPEN

BUT NOT AGAIN
THE WOUNDS I INFLICTED UPON THE DRAGON WERE *MORTAL*
IT MAY HAVE MANAGED TO LIMP AWAY FROM MY CASTLE, BUT IT COULD *NOT* HAVE SURVIVED
THE WOMAN AND HER COMPANION, THOUGH, MOST CERTAINLY *DID* *AGAIN*
WHEN WE ENCOUNTERED THEM, IT SEEMED ARWYN'S *ARM* WAS BROKEN, MY LORD
THAT'S *SOMETHING*
AT LEAST SHE WON'T BE WIELDING AYDEN'S *BOW* FOR A TIME
I WANT HER BROUGHT BEFORE ME, BOHR
WE WILL NO LONGER MAKE THE MISTAKE OF TREATING THE THREAT SHE POSES *LIGHTLY*.
USE ANY MEANS NECESSARY, DOUBLE YOUR FORCES, BUT I *WANT* HER
I SWEAR TO YOU, MY LORD, I WILL NOT *FAIL*
SEE THAT YOU *DON'T*
I AM *UNUSED* TO GRANTING SECOND CHANCES, CAPTAIN OF MY GUARD.
I DO NOT EXPECT TO REGRET GIVING *THIS ONE*
I *WILL* FIND THEM, MY LORD.

"...WHEREVER THEY ARE"
GARETH?
WHAT IS THIS PLACE? I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT
NOT MANY HAVE, ARWYN
I'M TRUTHFULLY NOT EVEN SURE IT HAS A PROPER NAME
THE FEW TIMES I'VE HEARD IT REFERRED TO, IT'S MOSTLY BEEN CALLED THE GLADE, OR SOMETIMES THE GLADE OF HEROES

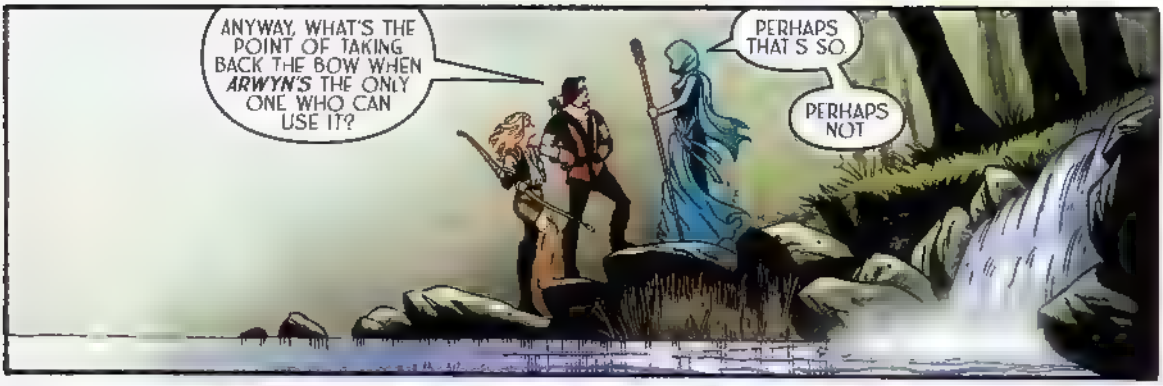
AND THESE ARE THE HEROES
WHO CARVED THEM?
NOBODY KNOWS.
NOBODY'S EVER TAKEN CREDIT FOR THEM, BUT A NEW CARVING IS ADDED WHENEVER A HERO EMERGES FROM ANY OF THE FIVE LANDS
SOME SAY THE GLADE ITSELF CARVES THEM
KREEG SEEMS TO HAVE FOUND A FAVORITE
WHAT?
SNF SNF
KREEG!
BAD DOG! Oh BAD DOG!
HAH!
HAHAHA HAHA HAHA!
DON'T YOU GIVE ME THAT LOOK
WHHN
AND YOU
GO AHEAD, KEEP LAUGHING.
OWFF!
WHMP

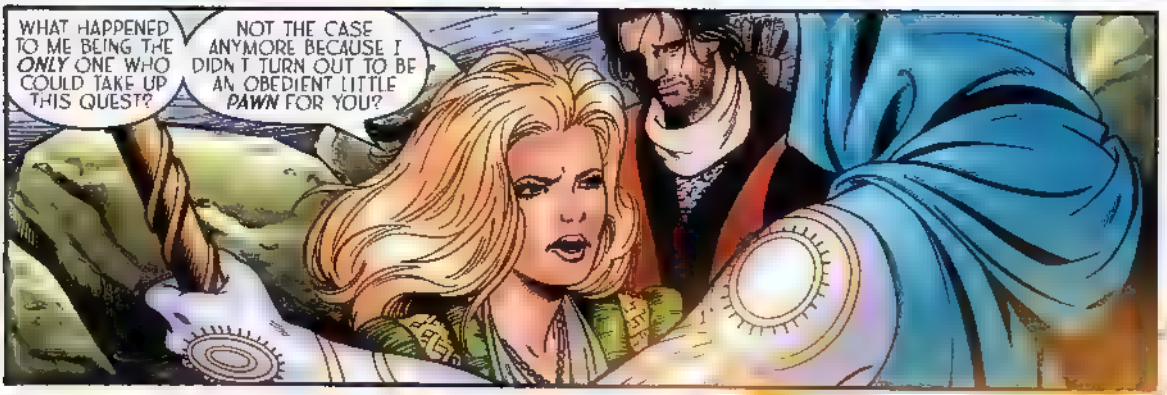
I CAN'T BELIEVE NO ONE KNOWS OF THIS PLACE
IT'S A FUNNY THING
IT'S ALMOST LIKE SOMETIMES IT'S HERE, SOMETIMES IT'S NOT
BUT I'VE FOUND IT EVERY TIME I'VE COME LOOKING
I'D KILL FOR FRESH WATER THAT'S A STREAM I HEAR?
IT IS IT RUNS THROUGH THE GLADE
SO HOW 'BOUT YOU FINALLY TELL ME HOW YOU LOST THE EYE?
CARD GAME?
HEARD THAT ONE
THEN SEWING ACCIDENT DEFINITELY SEWING ACCIDENT
ALL RIGHT, BE THAT WAY
YOU REALLY DON'T THINK MORDATH IS AWARE OF THIS PLACE?
PRETTY UNLIKELY
WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO REST HERE UNTIL WE MAKE THE PUSH TOWARD ANKHARA
LET'S NOT STAY TOO LONG
I IMAGINE THE TROLLS ARE STILL ON OUR TRAIL AND I WOULDN'T WANT THEM
SNEAKING UP BEHIND US

NEVEN!
I DON'T SUPPOSE I SHOULD BE SURPRISED, CONSIDERING YOU'VE *ALWAYS* COME AND GONE WITHOUT EXPLANATION
WHY ARE YOU HERE *THIS TIME*?
TO SEE *YOU*, ARWYN
FOR THE LOVE OF AYDEN DON'T *DO* THAT

I CAME FOR THE BOW
YOU
YOU WHAT?
I'M HERE TO TAKE BACK AYDEN'S BOW
YOU TRIED TO CIRCUMVENT THE QUEST YOU ATTEMPTED TO BRING ABOUT MORDATH'S DESTRUCTION WITHOUT GATHERING THE FIVE FRAGMENTS.
AND YOU FAILED. YOU'RE UNFIT TO TAKE UP THIS RESPONSIBILITY.
UNFIT? YOU'RE THE ONE WHO CONVINCED ME TO DO THIS. NOW YOU WANT TO –
WAIT
JUST WAIT. GOING AFTER MORDATH WITH THE DRAGON OBVIOUSLY DIDN'T TURN OUT THE WAY ANYONE WANTED BUT WE
SHE
LEARNED THE LESSON. WE'RE BACK ON THE PATH YOU SET US ON
MRF?
WE'VE EARNED THE RIGHT TO CONTINUE, NEVEN
ESPECIALLY AFTER WHAT WE'VE BEEN THROUGH

SNF
SNF
RRRRR
GRRRRRR
GRUFF
RUFFRUFF


ANYWAY, WHAT'S THE POINT OF TAKING BACK THE BOW WHEN *ARWYN'S* THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN USE IT?
PERHAPS THAT S SO
PERHAPS NOT


WHAT HAPPENED TO ME BEING THE *ONLY* ONE WHO COULD TAKE UP THIS QUEST?
NOT THE CASE ANYMORE BECAUSE I DIDN T TURN OUT TO BE AN OBEDIENT LITTLE *PAWN* FOR YOU?

I LOST MY *HUSBAND* I LOST MY *DAUGHTER* I LOST AN ENTIRE *CITY* I LOVED
THIS *QUEST*.
BRINGING ABOUT MORDATH'S DOWNFALL
THAT S *ALL* I HAVE, AND YOU'RE NOT TAKING IT AWAY FROM ME
YOU *FORGET* WHO YOU RE DEALING WITH

BE REMINDED

GROWF
PNK
RRRRR
RRF?

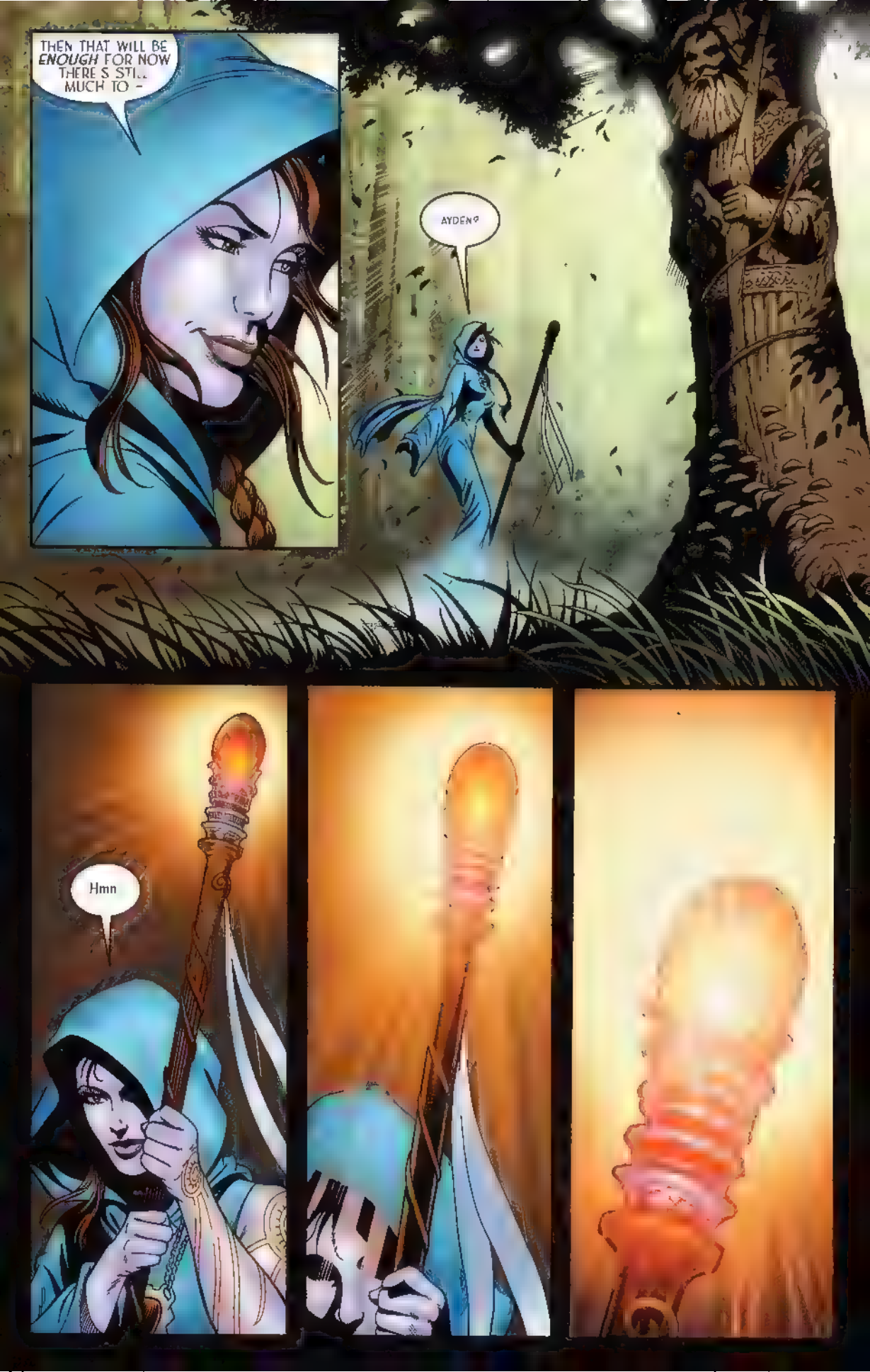
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE?! YOU WON'T TELL ME!
YOU'RE JUST SOME STRANGER PULLING OUR STRINGS!
YES, I MADE A MISTAKE AND YES, I LEARNED MY LESSON
BUT I HAVE THE FIRST FRAGMENT I'M NOT STOPPING NOW
YOU WANT THE BOW
..YOU TAKE IT FROM ME
GOOD
GROWF GROWF
KREEG?

GROWF
RARR RARRF
HWF
HFF
HFF
KREEG!

WHAT'S ALL THAT BARKING ABOUT?
WHAT'VE YOU BEEN UP TO?
WFF
SOME MISCHIEF, APPARENTLY
NEVER MIND
STOP TRYING TO APOLOGIZE.
GROWF
RUFF RUFF
AND YOU.
"GOOD."
WHAT DOES "GOOD" MEAN? YOU WERE TESTING ME?
IT WAS NECESSARY
I NEEDED TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE COMMITTED TO THIS ENDEAVOR
. TO CARRYING THE QUEST TO ITS CONCLUSION RATHER THAN SIMPLY USING IT AS A MEANS TO EXACT YOUR PERSONAL VENGEANCE
THERE IS MORE AT STAKE HERE THAN YOU CAN FULLY UNDERSTAND

I'LL SEE IT THROUGH TO THE END BUT NOT FOR *YOU*. FOR MY HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER
NOT FOR YOU
LET'S GO, GARETH
SUDDENLY, I DON'T FEEL MUCH LIKE BEING HERE
ASSUMING YOU'RE DONE *TOYING* WITH US, WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY
UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU'RE ACTUALLY GOING TO GIVE US SOME *HELP*
I'VE TOLD YOU, THAT'S NOT MY ROLE HERE
DIDN'T THINK SO
YOU'VE PROVEN TO ME THE QUEST IS *YOURS* YOURS *ALONE*
BUT I WI... *GUIDE* YOU WHEN NECESSARY AND *AID* YOU WHEN POSSIBLE
I WON'T HOLD MY BREATH.
UNTIL NEXT TIME, NEVEN THERE *WILL* BE A NEXT TIME, WON'T THERE?
Oh, YES.
I'M SURE OF IT
SATISFIED WITH YOURSELF, AREN'T YOU?

YOU'VE MADE CERTAIN OF YOUR PAWN'S LOYALTY AND MANAGED TO DRAW ME OUT
AM I TO ASSUME THIS DISPLAY WAS AS MUCH FOR MY BENEFIT AS IT WAS FOR ARWYN'S?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN
NO. OF COURSE YOU DON'T
I MUST ADMIT TO BEING PLEASED ARWYN WILL REMAIN INVOLVED
SHE INTRIGUES ME
AND WHAT OF YOU, AYDEN?
WILL YOU BECOME INVOLVED?
AH, THAT AGAIN
I'VE ALREADY GIVEN YOU THAT ANSWER HAVEN'T I?
DESPITE YOUR BEST EFFORTS TO DRAW ME INTO THE FRAY, NEVEN I AM DONE WITH SUCH THINGS BUT
I WILL CONTINUE TO WATCH HER


THEN THAT WILL BE ENOUGH FOR NOW THERE S STILL MUCH TO -
AYDEN?
Hmn

And so, after a brief interlude, Arwyn and I moved on...

...toward the destinies that awaited us.

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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Mordath

Bohr

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Ayden retreated to the solitude from which he'd come, but broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

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Swearing vengeance, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments at the behest of a mysterious and apparently magical woman calling herself Neven. Armed with Ayden's legendary bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn has dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

Having obtained the First Fragment in Middelyn, and following an encounter with Neven, Arwyn turned south toward Ankhara. Mordath's trolls, led by commander Bohr, pursued.

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I TOLD THEM I DIDN'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS.

FOOLS.

...YOUR PETTY THIEVERY LOST ME TOO MUCH TIME, AND THE WEATHER'S GOING TO *WORSEN*.
HERE, HORSE
LET'S SEE HOW MUCH GROUND WE CAN COVER BEFORE THE STORM CLOSES IN. MY *HOME* CALLS ME
AND EVERY MOMENT I'M AWAY ONLY *ADDS* TO THE SUFFERING

KRAKOAN
HO!
STEADY, YOU MISERABLE BEAST!
WE CAN FIGHT THIS GALE NO LONGER, HORSE.
WE'LL TAKE SHELTER UNTIL THE WORST OF THE STORM PASSES.
UNDER THERE

AT LEAST WE'LL BE *DRY*.
COME ALONG, HORSE
YOUR *OTHER* CHOICE IS TO STAY OUT THERE AND BE SOAKED.
WHAT'S GOT YOU SO *SPOOKED*?
SOMETHING YOU DON'T *LIKE*?
SOMETHING DEEPER IN THE *CAVE*

HRROWL

GAAAH!
GRRROW
ARRRR
SHUK

HWNF!
AHROOWL
COME, BEAST!
CHUK!
LET US END THIS..
THIS..

PROTECTING YOUR CUBS. WHAT ANY MOTHER WOULD DO.
THEN WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER...
.DON'T WE?
I'LL LEAVE YOU IN PEACE
...YOU DO THE SAME FOR ME.

THIS IS NO PLACE FOR *US*, HORSE
BETTER WE FACE THE *STORM* ..
..THAN A *MOTHER* PROTECTING HER OWN

A RIDER!

RAISE THE GATES!

A RIDER APPROACHES!

BOHR

IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU HOME AGAIN. YOU'VE BEEN TOO LONG ABSENT FROM THIS PLACE.

SHE WAITS FOR YOU.
IT IS FORTUNATE... THAT YOU CAME WHEN YOU DID
WOULD THAT I HAD BEEN ABLE TO ARRIVE *SOONER*, OLD FRIEND.
MY DUTIES FOR LORD MORDATH HAD TAKEN ME *FAR* FROM GRINBOR'S FORESTS
MY MOUNT'S BEEN RIDDEN LONG AND HARD, GNARN. CAN YOU SEE TO IT?
OF COURSE, BOHR
THIS IS NOT THE *HOMECOMING* I DESIRED.
...BUT AT LEAST I HAVE WHAT SHE NEEDS.
I HOPE THE RELIEF I BRING DOES NOT COME TOO LATE
I DON'T KNOW WHICH WILL BE *SWEETER* TO HER, BOHR. WHAT YOU BRING..
...OR MERELY SEEING HER *SON'S* FACE AGAIN.

GRENNA
YOU'RE HERE
FINALLY
I CAME AS QUICKLY AS I COULD ONCE WORD REACHED ME, SISTER
I LEFT MY COMMAND WITHOUT PERMISSION THERE WILL BE HELL TO PAY IF WORD EVER REACHES MORDATH'S FORTRESS..
.. BUT THE MEN WHO RIDE BEHIND ME ARE LOYAL. I CAN TRUST THEM
HOW IS SHE?
NOT GOOD AND GROWING WORSE
SHE'S BEEN ASKING FOR YOU
YOU BROUGHT IT?
YES.
THEN GO TO HER
SHE'S WAITED LONG ENOUGH

MOTHER.
I'M HERE.
MY SON?
YOU CAME
I'M SORRY.
I'M SORRY I WOULD HAVE BEEN HERE SOONER, BUT.
Shhh
NO APOLOGIES
YOU HAVE YOUR DUTIES. YOU SERVE A GLORIOUS LORD WHO HAS RAISED OUR PEOPLE TO GREATNESS IN THE FIVE LANDS
BUT OUR HOUSE IS *BETTER* FOR YOUR PRESENCE WITHIN ITS WALLS AGAIN
GRENNA SAYS THE PAIN IS BAD.
I HAVE NOT THE STRENGTH TO LIE TO YOU, BOHR
THE WASTING EATS AWAY AT ME. SOON THERE WILL BE NOTHING LEFT SAVE A SHELL.
FORTUNE SMILED UPON YOUR FATHER WHEN IT GAVE HIM A *BATTLEFIELD DEATH*, RATHER THAN THIS

BUT YOU BRING ME *MERCY*, DON'T YOU?
I...
...YES. I HAVE IT HERE.
THAT BLADE HAS BEEN IN OUR CLAN FOR GENERATIONS, PASSED TO EACH ELDEST CHILD
IT'S BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T IT?
YES.

MY SWEET SON
IT HAS *ALWAYS* BEEN THIS WAY IN THE CLANS. IT FALLS TO THE ELDEST TO END THE SUFFERING OF THOSE WITHOUT HOPE
WE DELIVER THE SAME MERCY TO A HORSE WITH A SHATTERED LEG OR A SICKLY STEER. WHY WOULD WE NOT DO SO FOR THOSE WE LOVE?
I HAVE *LIVED* MY LIFE AND THERE'S NOTHING IN THE WORLD FOR ME ANYMORE SAVE PAIN
I *WANT* TO BE RELEASED, BOHR. I WANT TO DIE WITH DIGNITY. NOT LIKE *THIS*
I'M *READY* TO GO ON
AND THERE'S NOTHING I DESIRE MORE THAN TO HAVE YOUR FACE BE THE LAST SIGHT I SEE
I REMEMBER WHEN I WAS A BOY, JUST A SMALL CHILD, AND THE STORMS WOULD COME AT NIGHT.
THE HOUSE WOULD BE DARK, AND THE RAIN WOULD HAMMER THE WINDOWS. THE WIND WOULD SHAKE THE HOUSE.
FATHER WAS AWAY TO THE CLAN WARS. I WAS *AFRAID*, BUT I WOULD COME HERE AND CLIMB INTO THIS BED WITH YOU.
AND YOU WOULD MAKE ME FEEL *SAFE*.

MOTHER, I...
...I...
MY BEAUTFUL PROUD SON
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, THERE'S NO NEED FOR WORDS NOT ANYMORE
I RAISED YOU TO BE STRONG BE STRONG ENOUGH TO GRANT ME THIS

IT'S DONE.
I FEEL *RELIEVED*. SHOULD I BE *ASHAMED* TO FEEL THAT WAY?
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU BROUGHT YOURSELF TO DO IT, BOHR. I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU—
IT WAS WHAT SHE WANTED
IT WAS *RIGHT*
YOU'LL SEE TO HER BODY?
I WILL
YOU CAN'T STAY BROTHER?
NO. I'VE SEEN TO MY DUTY HERE
...NOW THE DUTY TO MY *COMMAND* BECKONS ME, GRENNA.
MY LORD MORDATH CHARGED ME WITH HUNTING DOWN A THREAT TO HIM, AN *ARCHER*, AND I DARE NOT FAIL HIM
MY QUARRY JOURNEYS SOUTH.

"...AND SO MUST I."
THIS FAR SOUTH? YOU THINK THEY'RE *STILL* AFTER US?
THOSE TRO...S HAVE A BETTER NOSE FOR A TRAIL THAN THIS *DOG* OF YOURS, ARWYN
THEY MIGHT EVEN BE A FEW *DAYS* BEHIND US
BUT THEY'RE BACK THERE AND THEY WON'T GIVE UP
SO WHAT ARE YOU SAYING GARETH? WE SHOULD EXPECT THEM TO FOLLOW US ALL THE WAY INTO ANKHARA?
AND *BEYOND*. BUT I'M TRUTHFULLY MORE CONCERNED ABOUT *US*
THE HARD PART ISN'T GETTING *TO* ANKHARA

IT'S GETTING INTO ANKHARA

Neven
Pencils by John Dell
Inks by Tom Ryder
Colors by Laura Villari

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Once, they were magnificent.

They soared above their homeland like great, graceful birds of prey basking in the sun's radiance.

At one time their civilization was perhaps the pinnacle of the Five Lands

Their cities, hewn from the cliffs, were centers of art and learning in times of peace, impregnable strongholds in times of war.

The Ankharans were a hard people to know, suspicious as they were of outsiders, of those of us who were bound to earth.

Whenever I traveled in their lands, I was always a visitor, never a guest.

But I suppose none of that much matters now.

When Mordath the Undead led his troll armies across the Five Lands, conquering each in turn, Ankhara fell like all the others, painted in blood and fire.

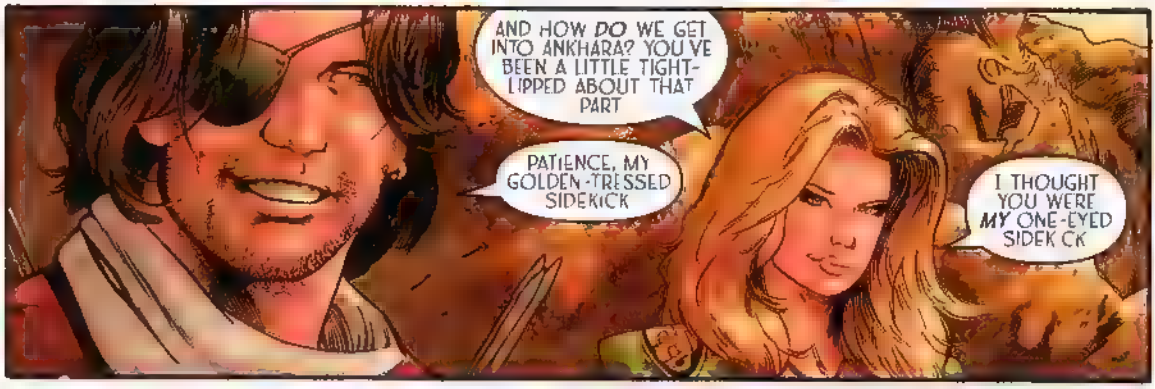
The trolls occupied every Ankharan city, including this – Ankhara itself, the seat of power.

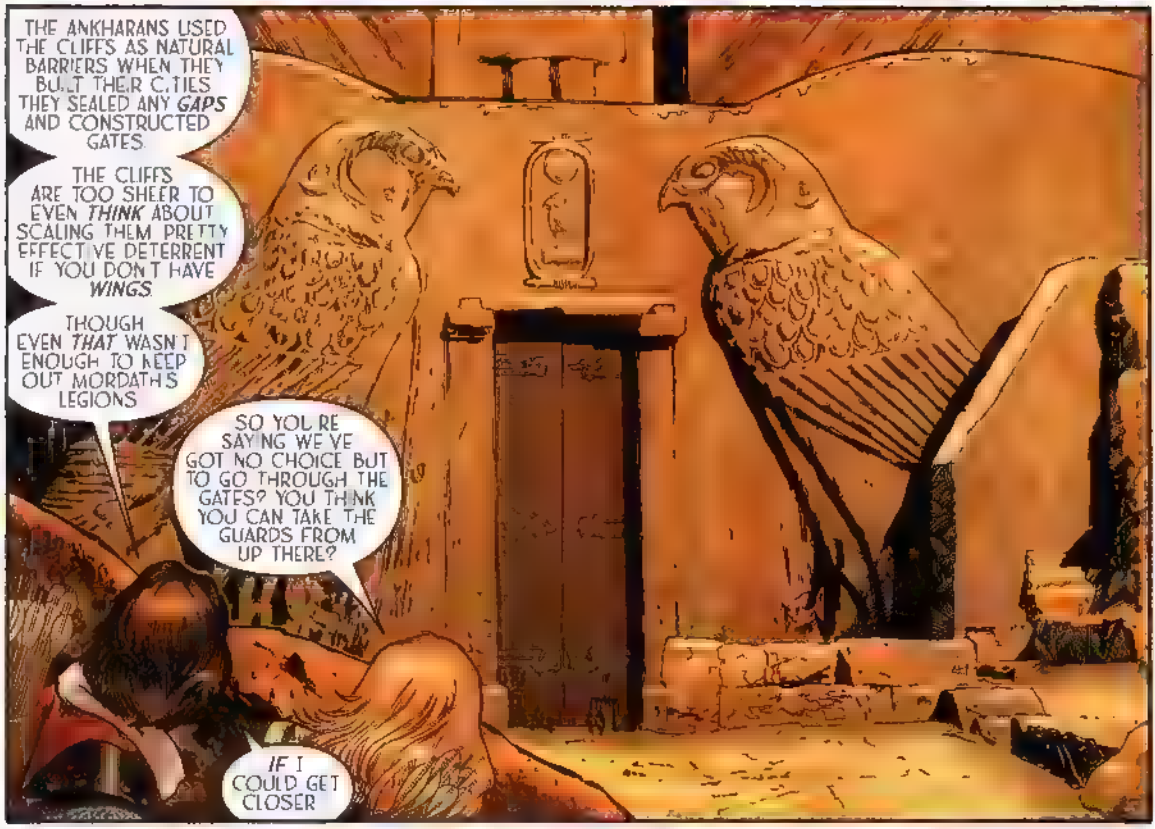
Its natives became little better than slaves in their own aeries, while the trolls turn their sacred places into foul pits.

So our plan of action...
THUK
...naturally...
THUK
...was to walk right into the middle of it all
THUK

Hmf
DRIFTING TO THE RIGHT A LITTLE

I DON'T LIKE THIS SITTING AND *WAITING*, GARETH
NEITHER DO I
BUT IT'S BETTER THAN GETTING ANXIOUS AND DOING SOMETHING *STUPID* SO THE TROLLS HAVE A CHANCE TO GRAB US UP
WE'D BE PRETTY SEVERELY OUTNUMBERED EVEN IF YOU *WEREN'T* NURSING THAT ARM, ARWYN
THE WAY IT'S FEELING IT'LL BE AT LEAST ANOTHER *WEEK* BEFORE I CAN THINK ABOUT GETTING RID OF THIS SLING
AND I DON'T KNOW *HOW LONG* BEFORE I'LL BE ABLE TO PULL A BOW AGAIN
YEAH, WELL, AT LEAST *ONE* OF US HAD BETTER BE ABLE TO SHOOT STRAIGHT THIS PLACE IS *LOUSY* WITH TROLLS
ALL THE MORE REASON I WANT TO GET IN AND GET OUT BEFORE ANY OF THEM EVEN KNOW WE'RE HERE


AND HOW *DO* WE GET INTO ANKHARA? YOU'VE BEEN A LITTLE TIGHT-LIPPED ABOUT THAT PART
PATIENCE, MY GOLDEN-TRESSED SIDEKICK
I THOUGHT YOU WERE *MY* ONE-EYED SIDEKICK


THE ANKHARANS USED THE CLIFFS AS NATURAL BARRIERS WHEN THEY BUILT THEIR CITIES THEY SEALED ANY *GAPS* AND CONSTRUCTED GATES.
THE CLIFFS ARE TOO SHEER TO EVEN *THINK* ABOUT SCALING THEM PRETTY EFFECTIVE DETERRENT IF YOU DON'T HAVE *WINGS*
THOUGH EVEN *THAT* WASN'T ENOUGH TO KEEP OUT MORDATH'S LEGIONS
SO YOU'RE SAYING WE'VE GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO GO THROUGH THE GATES? YOU THINK YOU CAN TAKE THE GUARDS FROM UP THERE?
IF I COULD GET CLOSER

COMPENSATE FOR THE WIND SHOOT QUICKLY ENOUGH TO TAKE THEM ALL. *MAYBE* BUT THERE'S PLENTY MORE INSIDE

AND KILLING *ONE* IS THE SUREST WAY TO ALERT THE OTHERS.
SO WE'RE BACK TO HOW WE GET IN
NOT TO WORRY I'VE GOT A PLAN

BUT WE HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL NIGHTFALL
IT'S JUST UP THERE PAST THE
DAMN
AHH, THAT SWILL THE ANKHARANS BREW AS BEER GOES RIGHT THROUGH YOU
TRUE ENOUGH
BUT IT'S THE ONLY THING MAKING GUARD DUTY TOLERABLE
GRR
WHAT WAS THAT?
I THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING. A SOUND
GRRR

SEE? THERE IT WAS AGAIN.
BUT I DON'T—
STAND STILL AND LISTEN
I DON'T HEAR ANYTHING ANYMORE
PROBABLY JUST SOME ANIMAL. COME ON.
...WE SHOULD GET BACK BEFORE WE'RE MISSED
TH S WAY

HANG ON
GIVE ME A MOMENT FOR THIS TO CATCH
THERE
GARETH, WHAT *IS* THIS PLACE?
THE CLIFFS ARE *HONEYCOMBED* WITH TUNNELS BUILT BY THE ANKHARANS. A FEW OF THEM TERMINATE IN HIDDEN ENTRANCES OUTSIDE THE CLIFFS, LIKE THE ONE WE USED TO GET IN HERE.
THESE PASSAGEWAYS REACH PLACES ALL OVER THE CITY. I'VE NEEDED TO USE THEM ONCE OR TWICE BEFORE WHEN I WAS IN ANKHARA.
THE TUNNELS ARE WELL-DISGUISED.
I DOUBT VERY MUCH THE TROLLS ARE CURIOUS ENOUGH TO HAVE DISCOVERED THEM
AND WHAT'S THIS ON THE WALLS?
IT'S BEAUTIFUL

HERE
THAT'S THE ANKHARAN FORM OF WRITING. I CAN'T BEGIN TO TELL YOU WHAT IT SAYS, BUT I KNOW THEY'RE BIG ON HISTORY AND ANCESTORS.
ANY CHANCE THE *FRAGMENT'S* SOMEWHERE IN THESE TUNNELS? I'M NOT EXPECTING A DREAM OR WHATEVER THAT WAS *LAST TIME* TO HELP US FIND IT.
THAT WOULD BE *CONVENIENT*...
BUT I REALLY HAVE NO IDEA. THE ANKHARANS KEEP A LOT OF SECRETS, AND THEY DON'T SHARE THEM WITH OUTSIDERS.
BUT YOU AT LEAST KNOW YOUR WAY AROUND IN HERE?
ABSOLUTELY
THIS IS THE WAY WE NEED TO.
uh.
WAIT, I THINK MAYBE IT'S THIS DIRECTION
um.
YOU REALLY *DON'T* KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING *DO YOU?*
OF *COURSE* I KNOW WHERE I'M.
WELL, YOU KNOW, I JUST NEED A MINUTE TO *REMEMBER* WHICH PASSAGE IS.
Oh, FOR AYDEN'S SAKE

JUST PICK ONE
≥NHH≤
OUCH.
NOT EXACTLY THE MOST GRACEFUL ENTRANCE I'VE EVER—
AHH!

A PLACE OF THE DEAD
THIS IS A PLACE OF THE DEAD
...THIS IS A. .

DON'T SCREAM AGAIN
>MMpH<
I WASN'T GOING TO IT JUST STARTLED ME, THAT'S ALL
WHAT KIND OF PLACE IS THIS?
YOU WERE RIGHT THE FIRST TIME IT'S A PLACE OF THE DEAD
THIS IS ONE OF THEIR BURIAL CHAMBERS. THE ANKHARANS MUMMIFY THEIR DEAD, AT LEAST THE IMPORTANT ONES.
AND THEN PUT THEM IN TOMBS LIKE THIS
THEY BELIEVE THE DEAD HAVE TO BE PREPARED FOR AN AFTERLIFE. THERE'S A WHOLE CEREMONY INVOLVED, VERY MYSTICAL STUFF, I GUESS.
THE CLIFFS ARE RIDDLED WITH THESE CHAMBERS
LOVELY
BY THE WAY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? THAT WAS A HARD TUMBLE.
DIDN'T HURT YOUR ARM AGAIN, DID YOU?
I'M NO WORSE FOR THE EXPERIENCE
SNFF SNFF

LET'S GO, KREEG
COME ON, I'VE GOT MY BEARINGS AGAIN
I DON'T THINK WE'RE FAR NOW JUST A BIT FURTHER THIS WAY
AND WE'LL BE ABLE TO GET INTO THE CITY WITHOUT EVEN BEING SEEN

THAT'S T
THAT'S WHAT? ARE YOU SURE YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING GARETH?
IT LOOKS LIKE A BLANK WALL
LOOKS LIKE
SEE THE CRACK HERE? IT'S HINGED
THE OTHER SIDE LETS OUT INTO THE BACK OF AN ALLEY WE... NEVER BE NOTICED
THERE'S A LITTLE CATCH ALONG HERE, AND ONCE YOU'VE FOUND THAT
=NNFe
YOU JUST PUSH
THAT'S GOT T
WELL?
ARE WE IN THE RIGHT SPOT?
YEAH

YEAH, I THINK YOU COULD SAY THAT

LADIES

GARETH?

GARETH, EXACTLY WHAT SORT OF DESERTED ALLEY *IS* THIS?

SO MY SENSE OF DIRECTION IS A LITTLE IMPAIRED BUT *REALLY*..

..WHO'S COMPLAINING?

WHO *ARE* YOU?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THE GOVERNOR'S HAREM CHAMBERS?

DID THE *DAWN WARRIOR* SEND YOU?

DAWN WARRIOR? I DON'T KNOW ANY—

AWAKE, YOU HARRIDANS!

THE *GUARDS* ARE COMING!

ARWYN!
ARWYN GET OUT OF
YOU THERE!
HE WANTS THREE OF THEM FOR LATER
UNCHAIN THOSE TWO AND THE NEW ONE.
YOU.
WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?
I CAN NEVER TELL YOUR KIND APART, BUT I ONLY EVER REMEMBER ONE HUMAN FEMALE IN HERE..
. AND YOU'RE NOT HER. SHE DIDN'T HAVE HER ARM IN THAT THING.
STILL .
...I SUPPOSE YOU'LL DO
YOU RE NOT AS UGLY AS MOST HUMANS

KREEG, MY FRIEND THIS ISN'T GOING TO END WELL
GAAHG!
LET'S NOT DRAW ATTENTION TO OURSELVES, ARWYN
LET'S GET IN AND OUT BEFORE THE TROLLS EVER KNOW WE'RE THERE, ARWYN
THAT REALLY SUNK IN, DIDN'T IT?
GRRRR

THE GOVERNOR CAN PICK *ANOTHER* FOR HIS NIGHT'S PLEASURE.
..YOU'RE GOING TO BE *DEAD!*
URGF!
I DON'T *NEED* TWO ARMS FOR THE LIKES OF YOU.
WHERE DID YOU *COME FROM,* HUMAN?
YOU MEAN JUST *NOW.*.
=NHN=
..OR WERE YOU ASKING ABOUT MY *MOTHER?*
AAGH!

GHRK!
GHI
ARWYN!
CAN I HAVE A WORD?
GHG!
WHAT HAPPENED TO US NOT CAUSING A DISTURBANCE? DO YOU REMEMBER THAT CONVERSATION, OR DID I JUST
HRK!
TELL ME WHO YOU ARE

AND THEN TELL ME WHY I SHOULDN'T KILL YOU

RON MARZ GREG LAND JAY LEISTEN JUSTIN PONSOR

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After obtaining the First Fragment in Middelyn, Arwyn and Gareth turned south toward Ankhara, home to a winged race but now occupied by Mordath's trolls. Arwyn and Gareth stole into the capital city via a secret passage and found themselves confronted by an Ankharan warrior.

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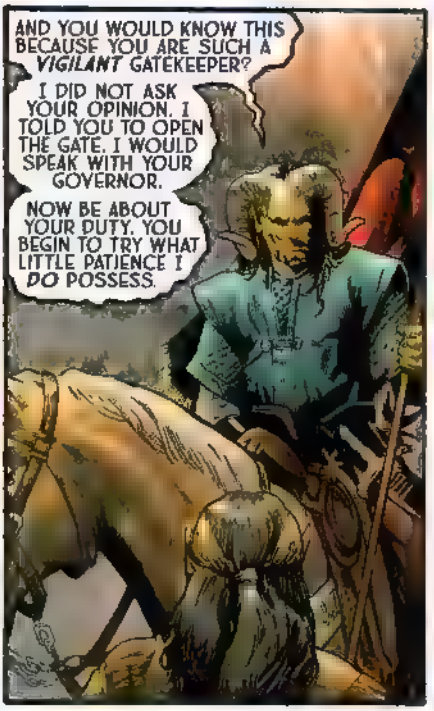
OPEN THE GATES
Hnnff
Mnff
WAKE UP, YOU MISERABLE CUR!
uWFF?!

I AM BOHR, CAPTAIN OF OUR LORD MORDATH'S GUARD.
I AM NOT BLESSED WITH GREAT PATIENCE.
BUT, AS IT SEEMS YOUR MOTHER MUST HAVE DROPPED YOU ON YOUR HEAD AS AN INFANT, I'LL REPEAT MYSELF

OPEN THE GATES.

MY MEN AND I SEEK TWO HUMANS JOURNEYING TOWARD ANKHARA
THEY MAY WELL BE WITHIN THE CITY ALREADY

BUT...THAT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE, SIR. NO ONE HAS ENTERED HERE.
NO ONE.


AND YOU WOULD KNOW THIS BECAUSE YOU ARE SUCH A VIGILANT GATEKEEPER?
I DID NOT ASK YOUR OPINION. I TOLD YOU TO OPEN THE GATE. I WOULD SPEAK WITH YOUR GOVERNOR.
NOW BE ABOUT YOUR DUTY. YOU BEGIN TO TRY WHAT LITTLE PATIENCE I DO POSSESS.

AND BE AWARE THAT GUARDS CAUGHT SLEEPING ON DUTY IN MORDATH'S FORTRESS ARE PUT TO THE TORCH.
YES, SIR!
OPEN THE GATES!
OPEN THE GATES!
CAPTAIN?
YOU TRULY BELIEVE OUR PREY HAS ALREADY ENTERED ANKHARA?
THEY WERE RESOURCEFUL ENOUGH TO GAIN ENTRANCE TO MORDATH'S FORTRESS
TWICE
AND THEY'VE ALWAYS MANAGED TO STAY JUST AHEAD OF OUR REACH
I WOULD ONLY BE SURPRISED IF THEY HAD NOT DISCOVERED SOME WAY TO PASS INTO ANKHARA UNDETECTED.
BUT WE'LL FIND THEM. AND WHEN WE DO. .
"...THIS TIME THEY WON'T SLIP THROUGH OUR GRASP"

Grip like a vise.
GHHHP
HHKK
KHH
Which is about what you'd expect from a guy a good two heads taller than me.
With wings.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE?
DO YOU?!
And a thick skull.
ANGH!

To be fair, I've met some very nice people who were initially trying to throttle the life out of me.

At least one of them was in a harem, too.

So, no, our introduction to the Ankharan resistance wasn't quite the sort of heroic tale they tell around campfires.

Certainly wasn't the first time I'd gotten into a little trouble when there was a woman involved. Or the last. Or even one of the more serious ones.

Come to think of it, that's how I got tangled up in this whole quest to begin with.

Because of her.

WE ARE *NOT* YOUR ENEMIES

NO?

THEN WHAT *SHOULD* I CALL YOU

KAFF

KAFF

WHEN YOU DESTROYED A PLOT WE SO CAREFULLY SET INTO MOTION?

STOP IT, RAHM!

I BELIEVE SHE SPEAKS THE TRUTH

TIYE?

THEY ARRIVED THROUGH THE TUNNELS

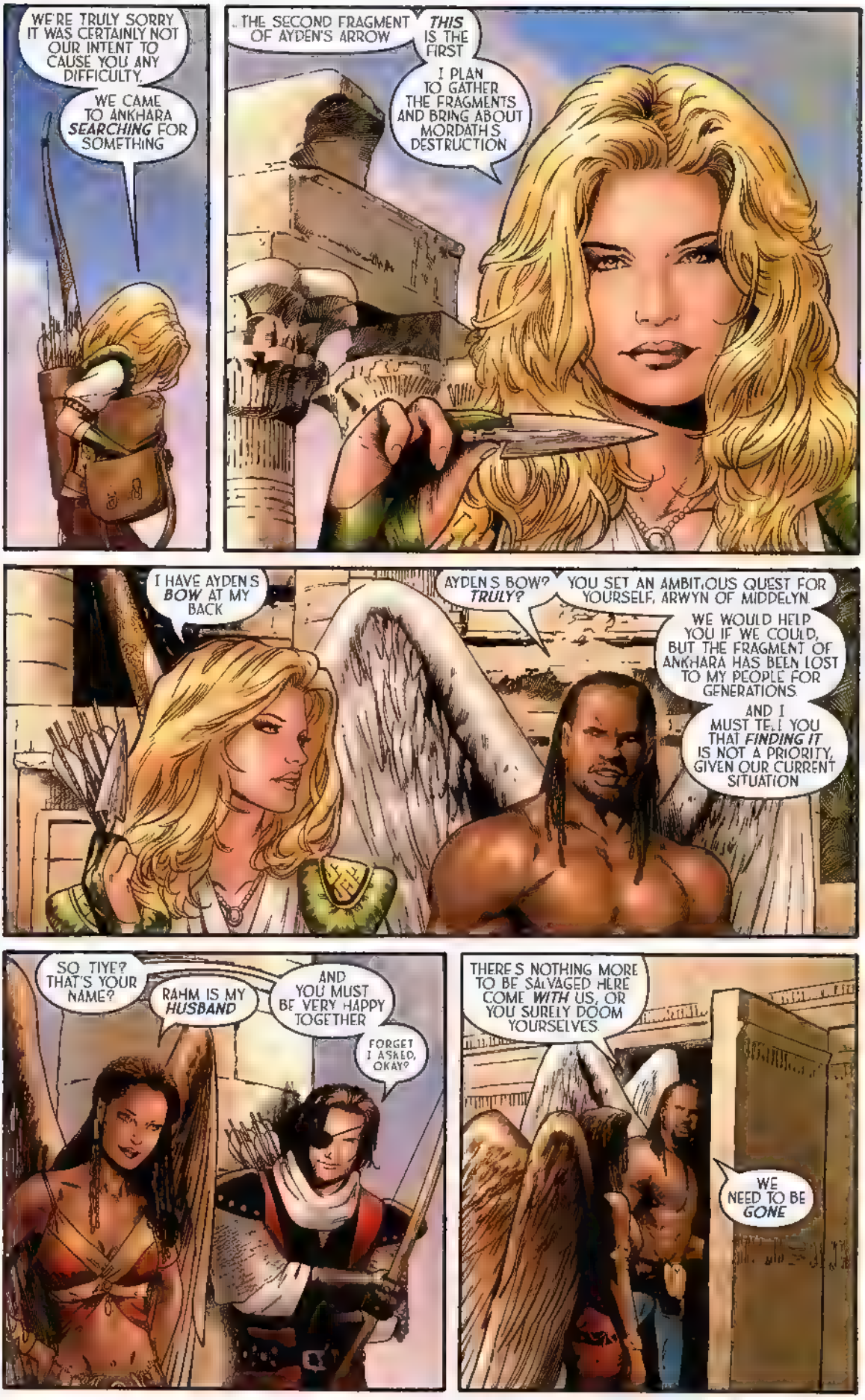
WHEN THE TROLLS CAME TO TAKE US.

THEY *SLEW* THEM

I *DON'T* BELIEVE THEY'RE ENEMIES

BUT I *ALSO* DON'T KNOW WHO THEY ARE OR WHY THEY'RE HERE

MY NAME IS ARWYN
THIS IS GARETH.
THAT'S MY DOG, KREEG
I HAIL FROM MIDDELYN GARETH'S FROM EVERYWHERE WE MEANT NO HARM
SO MAYBE YOU SHOULD BE A LITTLE MORE CAREFUL ABOUT WHO YOU'RE CHOKING.
LOOKED LIKE THERE WAS A PRETTY HORRIBLE FATE IN THE LADIES' IMMEDIATE FUTURE, SO WE TRIED TO SAVE THEM FROM IT
AT LEAST THAT'S HOW IT TURNED OUT
THEY DIDN'T NEED SAVING
THESE WOMEN ALLOWED THEMSELVES TO BE CAPTURED FOR THE HAREM IN ORDER TO GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO THIS NEW GOVERNOR TO ASSASSINATE HIM.
NOW, THANKS TO YOU, THE REBELLION'S EFFORT AND ITS CHANCE ARE WASTED
Oh
Uh oops.


WE'RE TRULY SORRY IT WAS CERTAINLY NOT OUR INTENT TO CAUSE YOU ANY DIFFICULTY.
WE CAME TO ANKHARA *SEARCHING* FOR SOMETHING
..THE SECOND FRAGMENT OF AYDEN'S ARROW
THIS IS THE FIRST
I PLAN TO GATHER THE FRAGMENTS AND BRING ABOUT MORDATH'S DESTRUCTION
I HAVE AYDEN'S *BOW* AT MY BACK
AYDEN'S BOW? *TRULY?*
YOU SET AN AMBITIOUS QUEST FOR YOURSELF, ARWYN OF MIDDELYN
WE WOULD HELP YOU IF WE COULD, BUT THE FRAGMENT OF ANKHARA HAS BEEN LOST TO MY PEOPLE FOR GENERATIONS
AND I MUST TELL YOU THAT *FINDING IT* IS NOT A PRIORITY, GIVEN OUR CURRENT SITUATION
SO, TIYE? THAT'S YOUR NAME?
RAHM IS MY *HUSBAND*
AND YOU MUST BE VERY HAPPY TOGETHER
FORGET I ASKED, OKAY?
THERE'S NOTHING MORE TO BE SALVAGED HERE COME *WITH* US, OR YOU SURELY DOOM YOURSELVES
WE NEED TO BE *GONE*

GONE?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, THEY'RE GONE?!
JUST... GONE, GOVERNOR KOHT
ALL THE HAREM WOMEN, WITHOUT A TRACE. THE ONLY THING LEFT BEHIND WAS THEIR CHAINS.
AND THE GUARDS YOU'D SENT TO BRING THEM HAD BEEN SLAUGHTERED
FIRES OF THE MASTER, WHY AM I SURROUNDED BY FOOLS AND INCOMPETENTS?!
GATHER MORE OF THE POPULATION FOR PUBLIC EXECUTIONS.
THESE DAMNED ANKHARANS WILL LEARN THEIR PLACE EVEN IF I HAVE TO DROWN THEM IN THEIR OWN BLOOD
WNF!

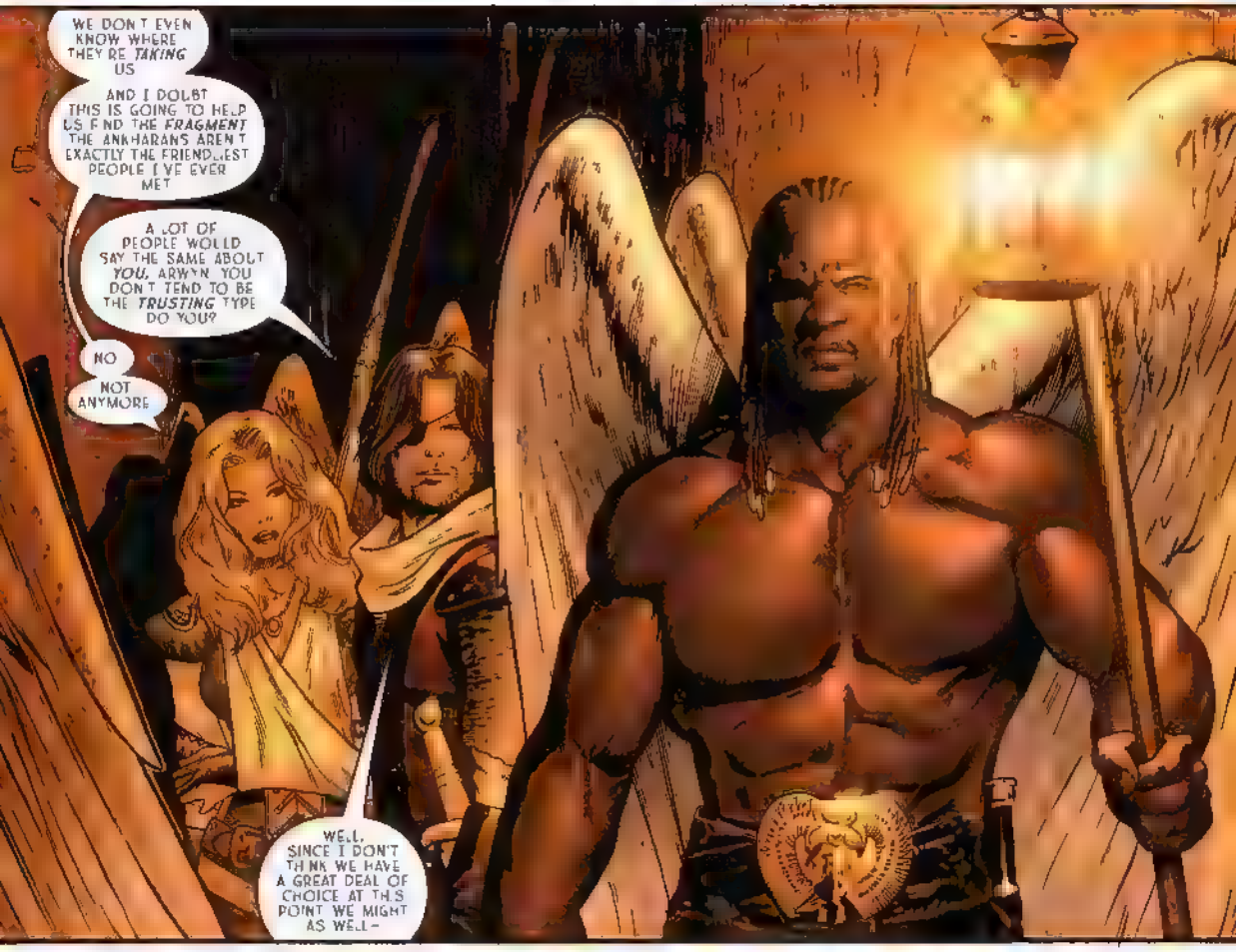
GOVERNOR KOHT...
..YOU LIKELY HAVE A MORE *PRESSING* MATTER AT HAND.
WHO ARE *YOU*?
LORD MORDATH SENDING ANOTHER OF HIS *LAP DOGS* TO SNIFF AROUND AND JUDGE MY PROGRESS IN PUTTING DOWN THIS DAMNABLE REBELLION?
I *AM* SENT BY LORD MORDATH...
...BUT I COULD CARE LESS ABOUT YOUR REBELLION.

I AM *CAPTAIN BOHR* OF MORDATH'S GUARD. I COME FROM OUR LORD'S FORTRESS IN MIDDELYN
..OR WHAT PRESENTLY REMAINS OF IT
...IN SEARCH OF TWO HUMANS AND A DOG TRAVELING SOUTH. ONE, A FEMALE ARCHER, POSES A THREAT.

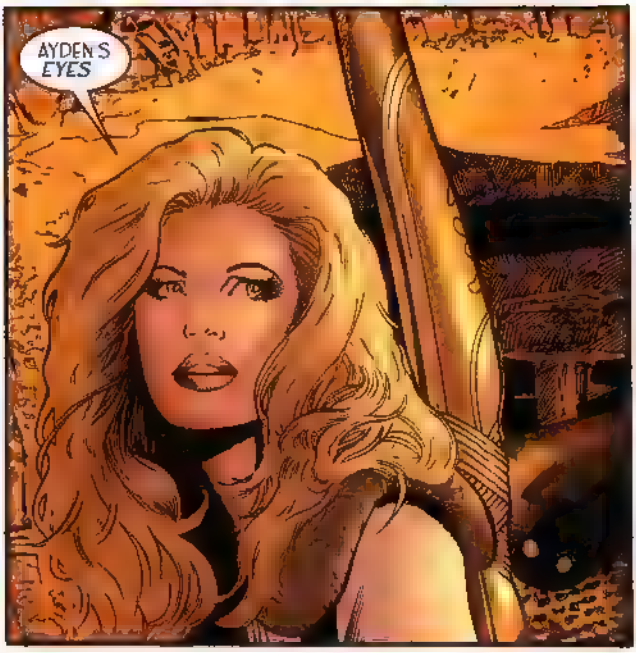
TWO HUMANS AND A DOG? AND THIS REQUIRES MORE THAN A *DOZEN* MEN?
PERHAPS MATTERS IN MIDDELYN ARE WORSE THAN I'D IMAGINED.

WE HAVE A THING IN COMMON, YOU AND I.
I COULD CARE LESS ABOUT YOUR QUARRY
GO ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS I HAVE OTHER CONCERNS.
MY PREDECESSOR WAS A FOOL AND LET THIS REBELLION TAKE ROOT WHILE HE GREW FAT SURROUNDED BY LUXURIES.
MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT HIS REWARD WAS NOT PLEASANT, AND *THAT* IS AN END I MEAN TO AVOID.
THE WOMAN POSSESSES THE BOW OF AYDEN
IT IS *SHE* WHO LAID LOW OUR LORD'S CASTLE BY LOOSING A DRAGON UPON IT
INDEED.
I OVERHEARD YOUR DISCUSSION OF WHAT TRANSPIRED IN YOUR HAREM. IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE INCIDENT AND MY QUARRY ARE RELATED.
THESE HUMANS HAVE PROVEN THEMSELVES SURPRISINGLY CAPABLE. THEY'VE SLIPPED AWAY FROM ME TWICE ALREADY.
IT WILL *NOT* HAPPEN AGAIN
IT WOULD BE *ILL LUCK* FOR BOTH OF US IF THE HUMANS ARE ALREADY WITHIN THE CITY AND HAVE SOMEHOW FALLEN IN WITH THESE REBELS OF YOURS.
BUT IF WE POOLED OUR RESOURCES, PERHAPS WE COULD SOLVE MY PROBLEM *AND* YOURS.
YOU SAID IT WAS CAPTAIN *BOHR*, YES?
VERY WELL, CAPTAIN .
..TELL ME MORE

I'M NOT SURE I *LIKE* THIS GARETH


WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE THEY'RE *TAKING* US
AND I DOUBT THIS IS GOING TO HELP US FIND THE *FRAGMENT* THE ANKHARANS AREN'T EXACTLY THE FRIENDLIEST PEOPLE I'VE EVER MET
A LOT OF PEOPLE WOULD SAY THE SAME ABOUT *YOU*, ARWYN. YOU DON'T TEND TO BE THE *TRUSTING* TYPE DO YOU?
NO
NOT ANYMORE
WELL, SINCE I DON'T THINK WE HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF CHOICE AT THIS POINT WE MIGHT AS WELL–

WE'RE HERE


AYDEN'S *EYES*

THIS IS THE TEMPLE OF AMUN-SET

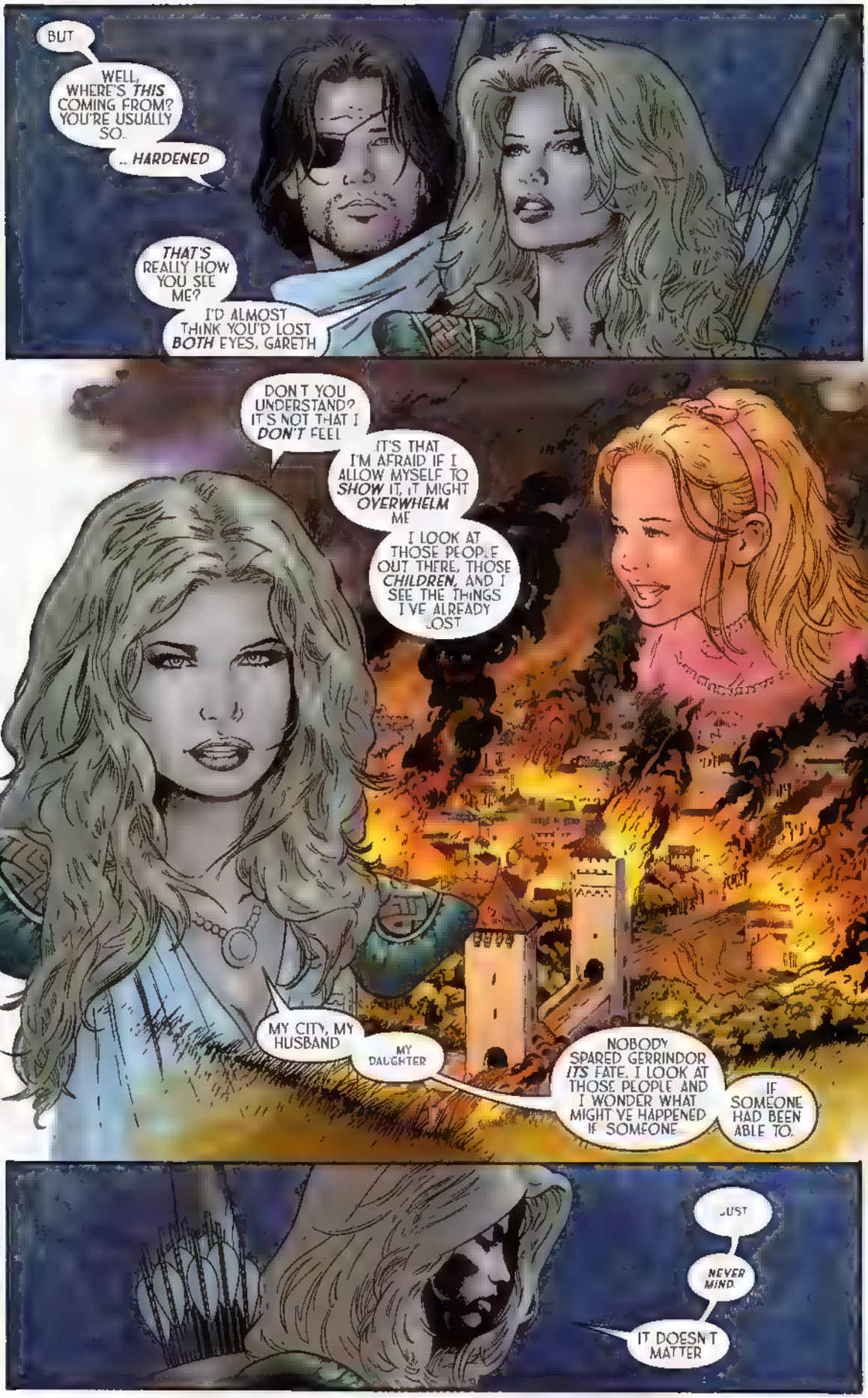
ONCE IT WAS MY PEOPLE'S MOST *HOLY*, MOST *SECRET* PLACE. NOW IT IS HOME TO THOSE OF US WHO RESIST OUR OCCUPIERS

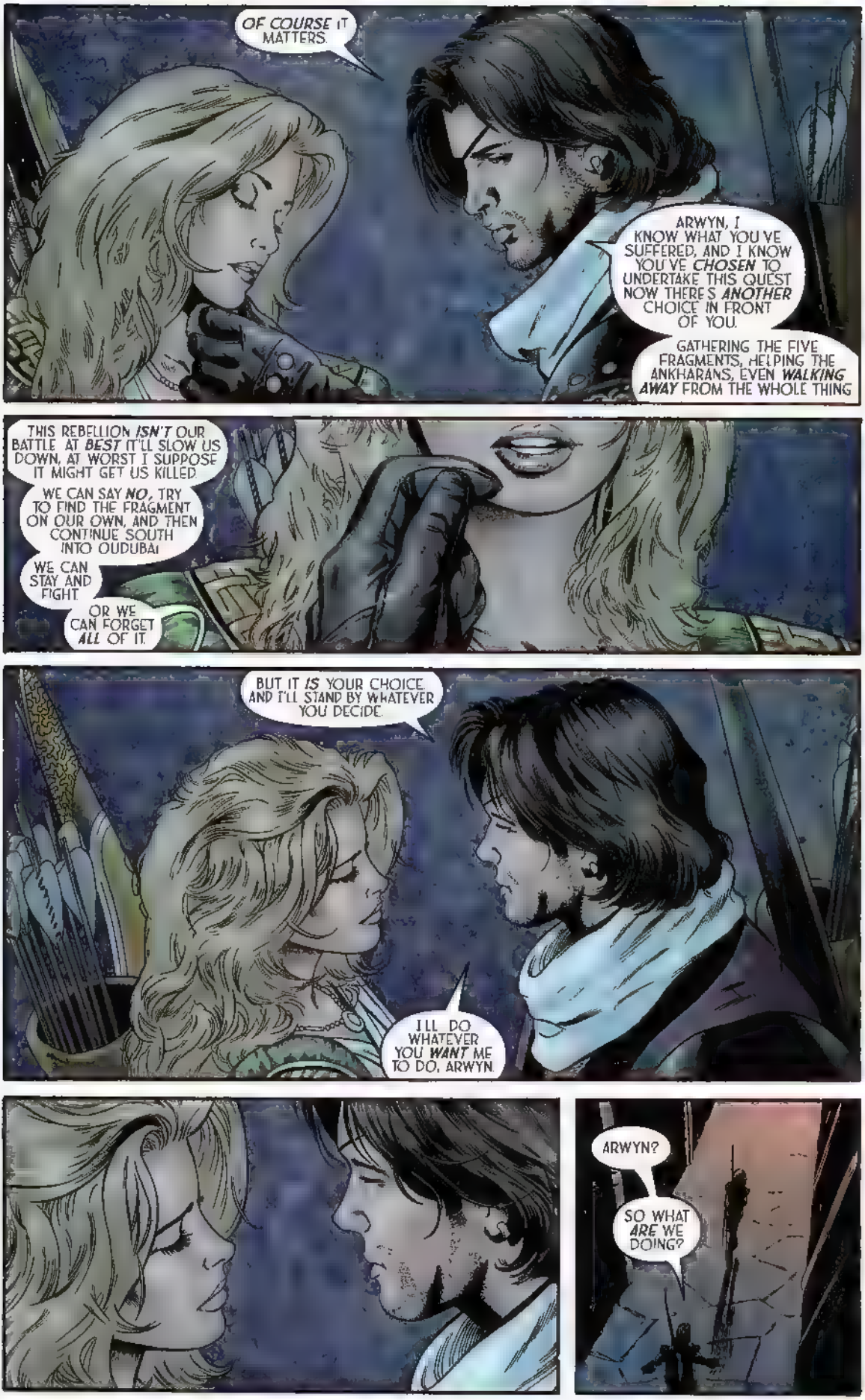
THIS IS WHAT THE PEOPLE OF THE SUN ARE REDUCED TO
WE, WHO ARE MEANT TO SOAR THE SKIES AND FEEL THE WIND'S CARESSES, NOW HIDE IN THE SHADOWS OF OUR OWN CITY
WHEN THE TROLLS MARCHED UPON US WE HELD THEM OUTSIDE OUR WALLS FOR MONTHS.
WE SLEW THEM BY THE THOUSANDS, YET ALWAYS THERE WERE MORE TO TAKE THE PLACES OF THOSE THAT FELL.
THEN MORDATH HIMSELF CAME
HIS POWER WE COULD NOT WITHSTAND.
THERE WERE THOSE WHO SAID WE SHOULD BURN WITHIN OUR AERIES AND PERISH AS A PEOPLE RATHER THAN AGAIN SUBMIT TO HIS IRON RULE
BUT I WAS NOT AMONG THEM
I AM THE DAWN WARRIOR
FOR AS LONG AS THE PEOPLE OF THE SUN HAVE EXISTED

THERE HAS BEEN A DAWN WARRIOR CHARGED WITH THEIR PROTECTION IN EACH GENERATION *ONE* IS CHOSEN TO BEAR THE MANTLE
AND I AM THE LATEST OF THAT UNBROKEN LINE WE ARE TO *LEAD* IN TIMES OF WAR, AND BE VIGILANT IN TIMES OF PEACE
IT IS THE DAWN WARRIOR'S DUTY TO PRESERVE OUR RACE OUR HERITAGE ALL THAT WE ARE
TO THAT END WE ARE GRANTED THE MOST *POWERFUL* OF OUR ANTIQUITIES TO WIELD
THE *DAWN SWORD*
FORGED MILLENNIA AGO, IT HAS BEEN THE BANE OF OUR ENEMIES, A WEAPON TO HARNESS THE MIGHT OF THE SUN ITSELF
AND NOW IT IS *LOST* TO US
THE DAWN SWORD IS KEPT IN A SECRET SHRINE HIDDEN DEEP WITHIN OUR CATACOMBS IN THE CLIFFS.
"BUT THE ROUTES TO IT WERE COLLAPSED BY TROLLS SEEKING TREASURE TO SATE THEIR LUST FOR GOLD

I AM THE DAWN WARRIOR
AND I HAVE FAILED IN MY DUTY
THOSE OF MY PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT FLED HERE, INTO THE DARKNESS, ARE LITTLE BETTER THAN SLAVES TO THESE TROLL OVERLORDS.
IT IS THE SAME IN THE OTHER CITIES OF OUR LAND
BUT I WILL LEAD THEM FROM THE SHADOWS. I WILL FIND A WAY TO THE DAWN SWORD.
AND THEN WE WILL TAKE BACK THIS CITY AND DESTROY THE BEASTS WHO FOUL IT
ONCE WE HAVE DONE SO WE WILL RETAKE OUR SISTER CITIES
UNTIL ALL ANKHARA AGAIN BELONGS TO HER PEOPLE
WE ARE A PROUD RACE. WE DO NOT EASILY ASK FOR HELP.
..BUT I ASK IT OF YOU NOW THE BOW OF AYDEN WOULD BE A POWERFUL BOON TO OUR CAUSE
SET ASIDE YOUR QUEST AT LEAST FOR A TIME
AND HELP SPARE MY PEOPLE THE FATE AWAITING THEM

ARWYN?
ARWYN?
I'll
uh,
I'll GO SEE WHAT THAT'S ABOUT
ARWYN?
HEY, WHAT'S GOING ON?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
NO
NO, I HAVEN'T BEEN ALL RIGHT IN A WHILE


BUT
WELL, WHERE'S *THIS* COMING FROM? YOU'RE USUALLY SO..
.. *HARDENED*
THAT'S REALLY HOW YOU SEE ME?
I'D ALMOST THINK YOU'D LOST *BOTH* EYES, GARETH
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? IT'S NOT THAT I *DON'T* FEEL
IT'S THAT I'M AFRAID IF I ALLOW MYSELF TO *SHOW* IT, IT MIGHT *OVERWHELM* ME
I LOOK AT THOSE PEOPLE OUT THERE. THOSE *CHILDREN,* AND I SEE THE THINGS I'VE ALREADY LOST
MY CITY, MY HUSBAND
MY DAUGHTER
NOBODY SPARED GERRINDOR *ITS* FATE. I LOOK AT THOSE PEOPLE AND I WONDER WHAT MIGHT'VE HAPPENED IF SOMEONE
IF SOMEONE HAD BEEN ABLE TO.
JUST
NEVER MIND
IT DOESN'T MATTER


OF COURSE IT MATTERS.
ARWYN, I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE SUFFERED, AND I KNOW YOU'VE *CHOSEN* TO UNDERTAKE THIS QUEST. NOW THERE'S *ANOTHER* CHOICE IN FRONT OF YOU.
GATHERING THE FIVE FRAGMENTS, HELPING THE ANKHARANS, EVEN *WALKING AWAY* FROM THE WHOLE THING
THIS REBELLION *ISN'T* OUR BATTLE. AT *BEST* IT'LL SLOW US DOWN. AT WORST I SUPPOSE IT MIGHT GET US KILLED.
WE CAN SAY *NO*, TRY TO FIND THE FRAGMENT ON *OUR* OWN, AND THEN CONTINUE SOUTH INTO OUDUBAI.
WE CAN STAY AND FIGHT.
OR WE CAN FORGET *ALL* OF IT.
BUT IT *IS* YOUR CHOICE. AND I'LL STAND BY WHATEVER YOU DECIDE.
I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU *WANT* ME TO DO, ARWYN.
ARWYN?
SO WHAT *ARE* WE DOING?

THEY ARE NOT OF OUR PEOPLE, RAHM. YOU EXPECT TOO MUCH OF THEM
WHAT *CHOICE* HAVE WE, ELDER? IF OUR CIVILIZATION IS NOT TO PASS FROM THE FACE OF THE WORLD—
ALL RIGHT
WHERE DO WE *START?*
And that's how we joined the Ankharan rebellion.
Of course, at that point I didn't know it would get me executed.

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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Rahm

Bohr

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Ayden retreated to the solitude from which he'd come, but broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb. Aided by a sigil that allows him to create and command fire, Mordath has again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments at the behest of a mysterious and apparently magical woman calling herself Neven. Armed with Ayden's legendary bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn has dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

After obtaining the First Fragment in Middelyn, Arwyn and Gareth turned south toward Ankhara, home to a winged race but now occupied by Mordath's trolls. Arwyn and Gareth agreed to set aside their quest for the moment in order to aid the Ankharan rebellion led by the Dawn Warrior, Rahm.

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mmmf
Whuh?
Shhh

LET'S NOT BE *LOUD*

WE DON'T WANT TO WAKE THE OTHERS

YES *ARWYN*

WHY, WERE YOU EXPECTING SOMEONE ELSE?

WELL... NO TRUTHFULLY, I WASN'T EXPECTING *ANYONE*

I MEAN, I THOUGHT YOU AND I WERE SUPPOSED TO BE, YOU KNOW, *PLATONIC*

NOT THAT I'M COMPLAINING BUT

WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?*

Oh, I THINK IT'S PRETTY *OBVIOUS* WHAT I'M DOING, DON'T YOU?

IT'S TIME WE STOPPED ACTING LIKE THERE'S NOTHING GOING ON BETWEEN US

I FEEL IT. I KNOW *YOU* DO, TOO

SO WHY DON'T WE FINALLY LET IT *HAPPEN*, GARETH?

ARWYN? Uh...

ARWYN?

GARETH
GARETH. WAKE UP
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU LOOK A LITTLE STARTLED
Uh YEAH, I WAS JUST um DREAMING
ABOUT THE SECOND FRAGMENT?
NO NOT THAT KIND OF DREAM
WHAT'S GOING ON?
RAHM'S GATHERING EVERYONE
LET'S GO
SURE THING I'LL BE RIGHT THERE JUST
GIVE ME A MINUTE

THIS IS THE SHRINE OF THE DAWN SWORD.
It must've been hard for the Ankharans to allow us into their most secret places...
...much less ask for help from a couple of mud-walkers.
That's their name for us, you know.
BUT IT IS UNREACHABLE. WE HAVE SEARCHED FOR AN ALTERNATE ACCESS TO THE SHRINE, BUT ONE HAS YET TO BE FOUND
WHEN MORDATH'S TROLLS TOOK THE CITY, THEY SET ABOUT SEARCHING FOR RICHES TO LOOT
THEIR GREED FOR GOLD OVERCAME THEIR FEAR OF OUR HONORED DEAD. THE TROLLS GAINED ENTRANCE TO SOME OF OUR PASSAGEWAYS.
BUT THE FOOLS CAUSED COLLAPSES. THE WAY TO THE SHRINE IS NOW UNPASSABLE.
SO.
WHAT D I MISS?

WE MUST FIND ANOTHER ROUTE INTO THE SHRINE VIA PASSAGEWAYS ABANDONED LONG AGO. I MUST TAKE UP THE DAWN SWORD
WE WHO HAVE CHOSEN TO RESIST THE TROLLS ARE TOO FEW. BUT THE SWORD'S POWER COULD HELP DRIVE OUT OUR OCCUPIERS AND RALLY THE PEOPLE
OTHERWISE
They're famously aloof, the Ankharans.
And that's the nice way to put it
In the time I'd spent among them previously, I was never viewed as anything but an inferior.
OTHERWISE I WILL HAVE FAILED IN MY SACRED DUTY AS DAWN WARRIOR
AS MY PEOPLE'S PROTECTOR
They keep to themselves, cloistered in their cities carved from cliffs
And who can blame them, really?
I TOLD RAHM WE'D HELP WITH THE SEARCH
MAKES SENSE
I'M SURE A GUY WITH ONE EYE AND AN ARCHER WITH ONE ARM WILL BE A BIG HELP IN LOOKING FOR -
Shush.
OOF!

ALL RIGHT SO WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT HERE?
MOST OF THE LOWER PASSAGES WERE NEVER MAPPED BEFORE THEY WERE ABANDONED, BUT THEY ARE OUR ONLY HOPE OF REACHING THE SHRINE
WE'LL SPLIT INTO SEARCH PARTIES.
TYE LEADING ONE GROUP
HAMET ANOTHER
WHILE THE TWO OF YOU WILL GO WITH ME
ARCHER, I KNOW YOU CAME TO MY LAND SEEKING YOUR OWN PRIZE, I WOULD AID YOU IF I COULD.
Why consort with those of us who are forever chained to the mundane ground...
...when they can soar high above the skin of the world?
BUT AYDEN'S FRAGMENT HAS BEEN LOST SINCE BEFORE THE TIME OF MY FATHER'S FATHER
MY QUEST WILL HAVE TO WAIT
MAYBE BY HELPING YOU WE CAN HELP OURSELVES
I know I can think of at least one instance when flying would've come in handy.
But we'll get to that part in a bit

NO ONE HAS WALKED THE LOWER PASSAGES IN A GENERATION. WE SEALED THESE CORRIDORS WHEN WE NO LONGER HAD NEED OF THEM.
AND THEY HAVEN'T BEEN OPENED SINCE.
Augh.
YOU DON'T SAY.
FROM THE *SMELL* OF IT, I'D SAY THE AIR'S NOT THE *ONLY* THING THAT'S DEAD IN THERE.
FOLLOW CLOSELY.
THIS WOULD NOT BE A WISE PLACE TO LOSE YOUR WAY.
SO WHY DRAG THE BOW ALONG, ARWYN? IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'RE IN ANY SHAPE TO *USE* IT.
IS AYDEN'S BOW THE SORT OF THING *YOU'D* LEAVE LYING AROUND?
THIS COMES WITH ME WHEREVER I GO.
WHETHER I CAN ACTUALLY *PULL IT* OR NOT.

HOW'S THE ARM FEEL?
YOU HAVE TO BE ANXIOUS TO GET RID OF THAT SLING
MORE THAN ANXIOUS. THERE'S REALLY NO PAIN ANYMORE
BUT I'D RATHER NOT RISK DOING MORE DAMAGE IF IT'S NOT COMPLETELY HEALED
MAYBE ANOTHER WEEK AND—
WAIT
WHAT'S
ARWYN!

I VE GOT YOU
HANG ON
HNF
HANG ON AND I'LL PULL YOU BACK UP
I NEED TO GET A BETTER GRIP
GARETH, I M SLIPPING I M
ARWYN!
FOR A GUY WITH WINGS IT TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH TO GET BACK HERE, RAHM!
WHERE WOULD THIS COLLAPSE GO? HOW DO WE REACH IT?
I TOLD YOU, THESE PASSAGES WERE NEVER MAPPED
I DON T KNOW WHERE SHE IS, AND EVEN IF I DID

I DON'T KNOW HOW WE'D REACH HER
Mmm.
NO
NO, NO, NO
DON'T YOU *DARE* GO OUT
THAT'S BETTER
AT LEAST I CAN *SEE* WHERE I AM

WHEREVER THAT IS
What happened between us?
That's really what you want to know, not how arrogant the Ankharans were or how they buried their dead.
Hard not to fall in love with her at least a little, isn't it?

Yes, she was beautiful, that much is obvious. Didn't need two eyes to see that.
But there was so much more.
THE DAWN SWORD
IT MUST BE
Her strength Her sense of honor
And that aura of sadness so palpable you immediately wanted to fix it
Even though Arwyn was about the last person who needed it...

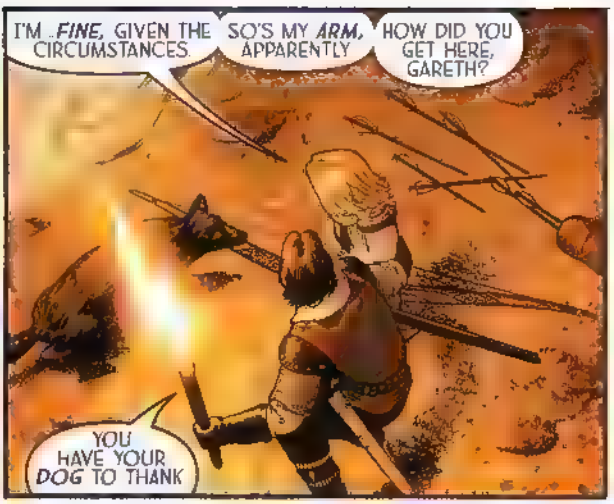
You naturally wanted to protect her

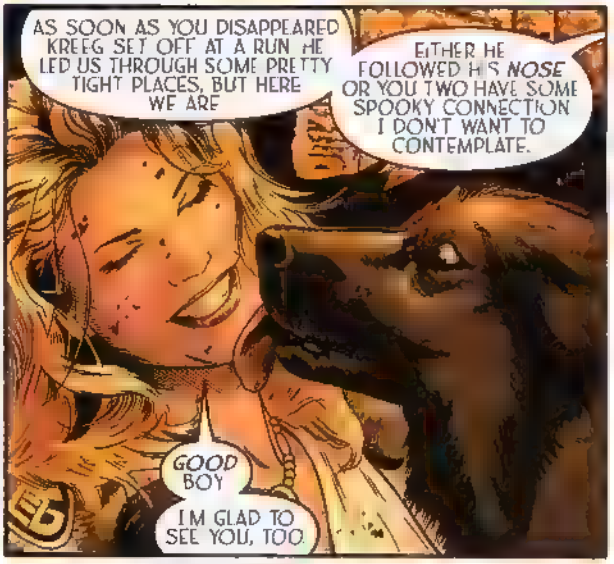
As far as what she thought of me at that point .
..I don't know.
HRRRR
Most other women knew within a day whether they wanted to kiss me or slap me
Sometimes both.
But with Arwyn
..Arwyn was different.

She'd lost her husband and her daughter, everything that meant anything to her.
HWF!
I knew that
And I also knew a relationship, any kind of relationship, was the last thing on her mind.
But there also was an inevitability that came from being together all the time, depending upon each other for survival
I GUESS NOW'S WHEN WE FIND OUT
IF I'M UP TO DOING THIS
It would almost be surprising if something didn't happen.
THAT'S RIGHT

KEEP COMING
Assuming we both stayed alive long enough
ARWYN?

ARWYN!
I WASN'T SURE WE WERE EVER GOING TO SEE YOU AGAIN YOU STILL IN ONE PIECE?
HROOF


I'M ...FINE, GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES
SO'S MY ARM, APPARENTLY
HOW DID YOU GET HERE, GARETH?
YOU HAVE YOUR DOG TO THANK


AS SOON AS YOU DISAPPEARED KREEG SET OFF AT A RUN. HE LED US THROUGH SOME PRETTY TIGHT PLACES, BUT HERE WE ARE
EITHER HE FOLLOWED HIS NOSE OR YOU TWO HAVE SOME SPOOKY CONNECTION I DON'T WANT TO CONTEMPLATE.
GOOD BOY
I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU, TOO

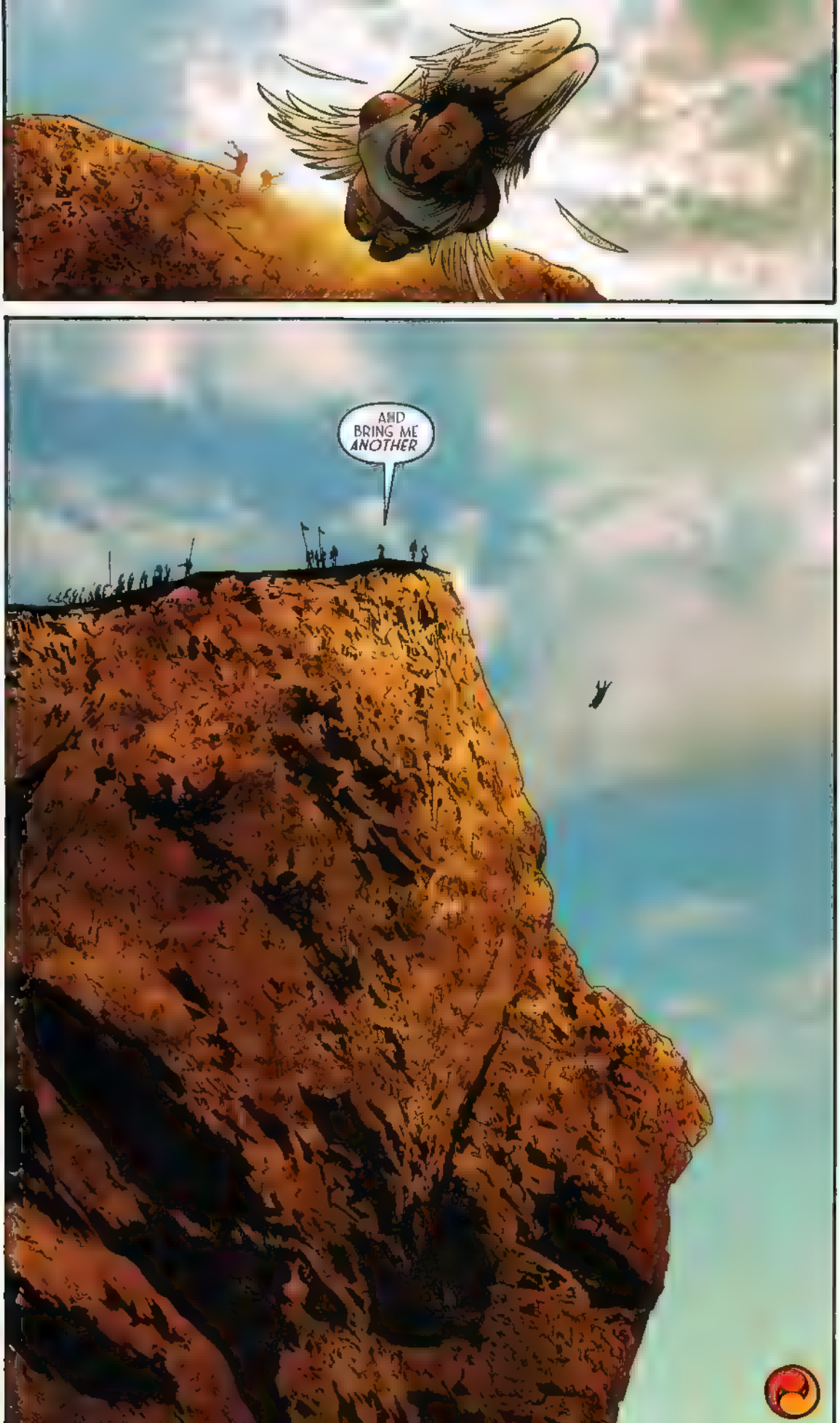
HERE, YOU DROPPED THIS.
OR IT DROPPED YOU
THANKS

CARE TO EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
I WOULD IF I COULD WHEN I TRIED TO PICK UP THE SWORD THAT
THING..
CAME AFTER ME. THERE'S NO WAY IT COULD'VE BEEN ALIVE, BUT .
BUT IT WAS. I TOLD YOU THE ANKHARANS WERE A PRETTY MYSTERIOUS BUNCH
MAYBE A GUARDIAN MEANT TO KEEP THE SWORD OUT OF THE HANDS OF INFIDELS LIKE US?
I DON'T KNOW
BUT AT LEAST HE'S FOUND WHAT HE'S LOOKING FOR'

NOW I WILL SET MY PEOPLE FREE

YOU KNOW
I THINK I'VE GOT AN IDEA

AAAGH!
WHY DO YOU *RESIST* ME?
YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FELLOWS. YOU KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO *YOU*.
SOMEONE WILL TELL ME. IF NOT YOU, THEN THE *NEXT*, OR THE ONE AFTER
SPARE YOURSELF THIS PAIN. SPARE YOURSELF THIS FATE.
nghh
TELL ME.
TELL ME WHERE THE REBELS ARE *HIDING!*
NOTHING. KOHT I TELL YOJ *NOTHING*
THAT SECRET I TAKE TO MY GRAVE
YES. *YOU* DO.
GET RID OF HIM..


AND BRING ME ANOTHER

MORDATH
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Inks by Jay Leister
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Our Story So Far...

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Gareth

Koht

Bohr

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Ayden retreated to the solitude from which he'd come, but broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb. Aided by a sigil that allows him to create and command fire, Mordath has again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments at the behest of a mysterious and apparently magical woman calling herself Neven. Armed with Ayden's legendary bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn has dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

After obtaining the First Fragment in Middelyn, Arwyn and Gareth journeyed to Ankhara, home to a race of winged warriors. Arwyn joined the rebellion against Mordath's occupying trolls and helped locate the Dawn Sword, a powerful relic of the Ankharan people.

Sojourn® Vol. 1 Issue 17 DECEMBER 2002 FIRST PRINTING Published by CG Entertainment, Inc. Office of publication: 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400 Oldsmar Florida 34677 **Sojourn® CrossGen®, CrossGen Comics®, CrossGeneration®, CrossGeneration Comics®** and the **CrossGen sigil®** are registered trademarks of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. The **CG Entertainment logo™** and all prominent **Sojourn®** characters and images are Trademark and Copyright 2002 CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. The stories, incidents and characters in this publication are fictional. Any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reproduced in any form without the express written consent of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. PRINTED IN CANADA.

CGE

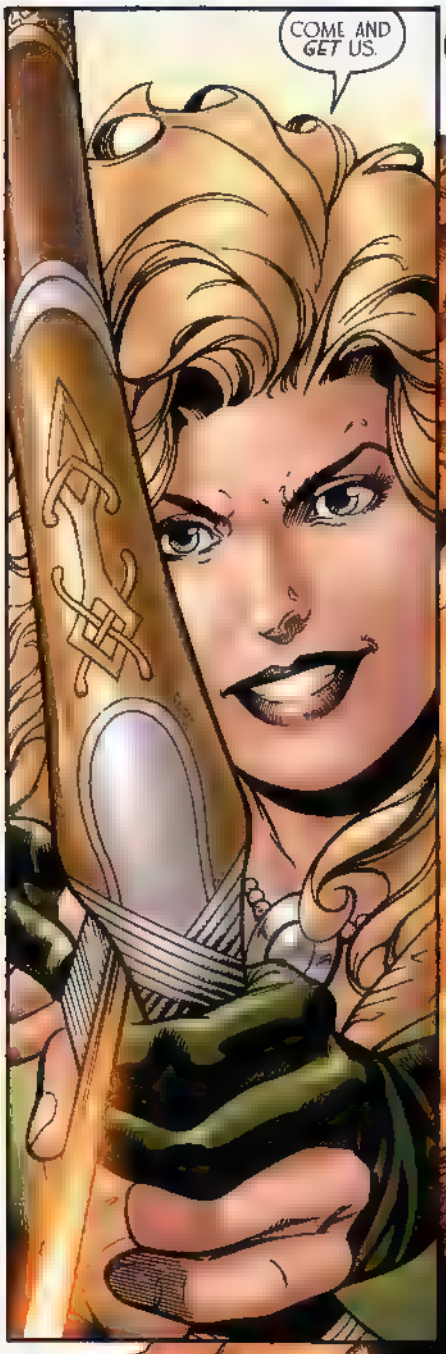
It seemed like a good idea at the time
Really it did
NOW HAUL AWAY...

AND PULL FOR ALL YOU'RE WORTH, YOU DOGS!
PULL!

I WANT THIS DAMNED UGLY THING ON THE GROUND AND IN *PIECES*...
..AND I WANT THOSE *GEMSTONE EYES!*
BLASPHEMER!
YOU DEFACE EVEN OUR *GODS!*
STILL YOUR TONGUE UNLESS YOU WANT TO *LOSE* IT, OLD MAN!
ALL OF YOU ANKHARANS LIVE ONLY AT THE MERCY OF OUR LORD MORDATH, AND *THEN* ONLY IF YOU KEEP YOUR PLACE.
IF IT WAS UP TO ME, I'D HAVE EVERY LAST *ONE* OF YOU THROWN FROM THE CLIFFS.
MAYBE YOU'D PREFER TO KEEP YOUR *TONGUE* AND HAVE YOUR *EYES* SCOOPED FROM YOUR SKULL.
BETTER *THAT* THAN WATCH THE EYES OF YOUR *GOD* PRIED FROM THEIR SOCKETS, hm? I CAN MAKE THAT—
HRRK!

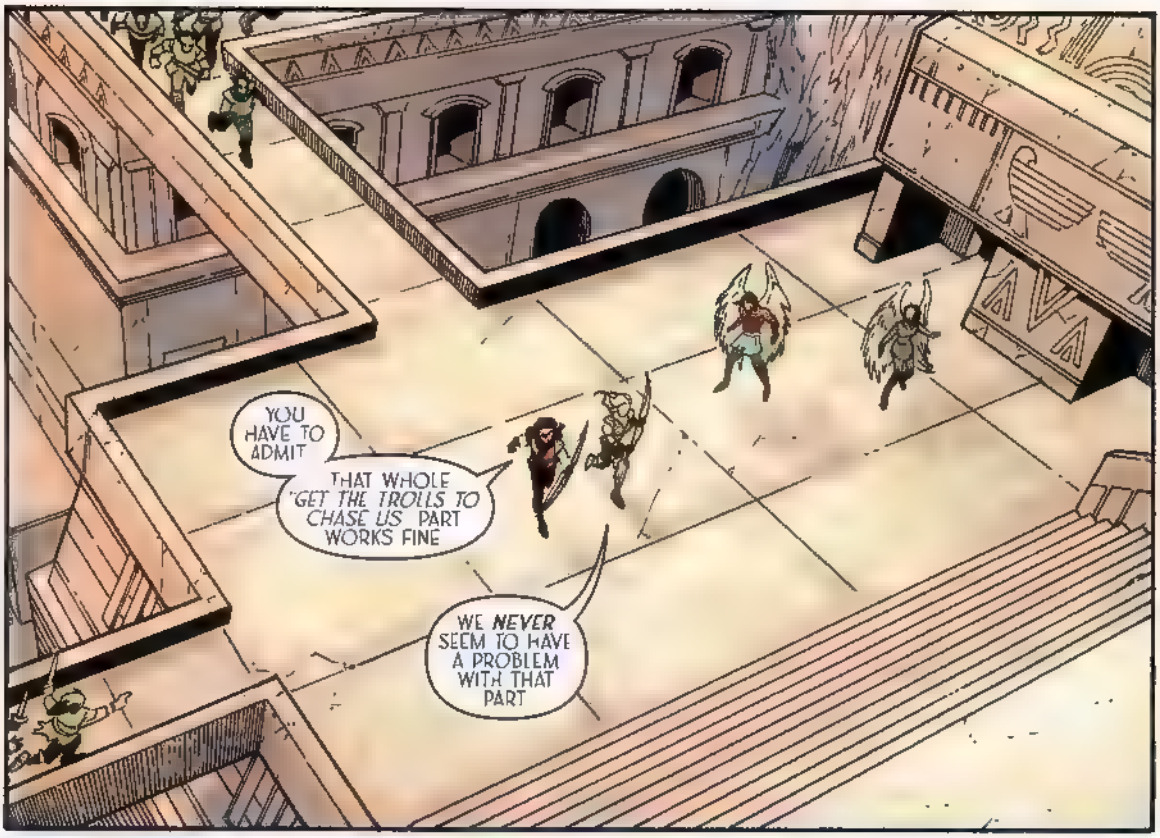
NICE SHOT
THANKS

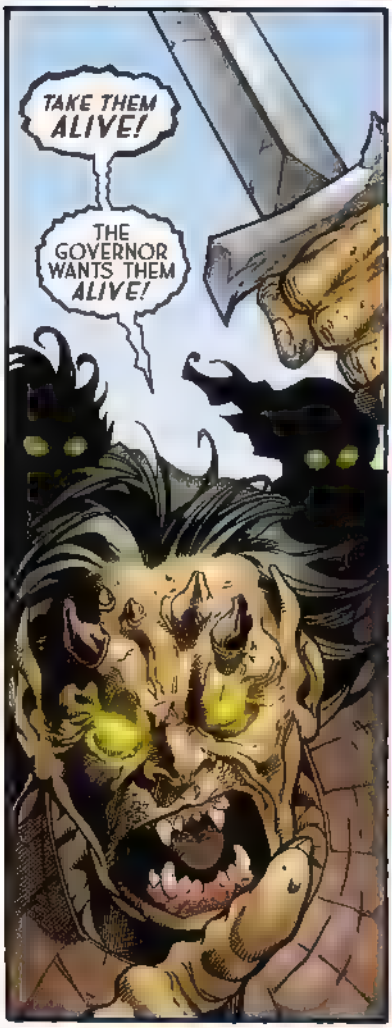
THE HUMANS!
THE ONES GOVERNOR KOHT WANTS!

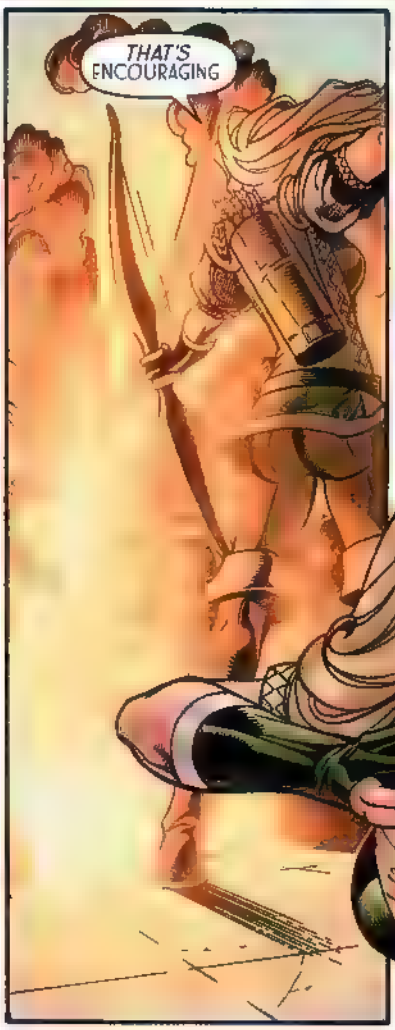

COME AND GET US.

YOU KNOW, I THINK WE'VE GOT THEIR ATTENTION.
I THINK YOU MIGHT HAVE A POINT
UGF!
GETTING A LITTLE CROWDED HERE, ARWYN
MIGHT BE A PRUDENT TIME TO RELOCATE.
TAKE THEM!

HWNF!
AT THIS POINT...
I'M WILLING TO CONCEDE MAYBE THIS WASN'T SUCH A *GREAT PLAN* AFTER ALL
LET'S NOT FORGET
HRG!
WHOSE *IDEA* IT WAS
WELL, LET'S NOT FORGET WHO *AGREED* TO IT!
TRUST ME, YOU SAID
HK!
YEAH I *DID* SAY THAT


YOU HAVE TO ADMIT
THAT WHOLE "GET THE TROLLS TO CHASE US" PART WORKS FINE
WE NEVER SEEM TO HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THAT PART


TAKE THEM ALIVE!
THE GOVERNOR WANTS THEM ALIVE!


THAT'S ENCOURAGING

JUST HOPE THEY DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY
WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF ROOM IN A HURRY HERE, ARWYN

NO WONDER THESE PEOPLE LIKE HAVING WINGS SO MUCH
HRK!
THIS HAD BETTER WORK, GARETH!
COME ON, WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

TELL US
TELL US WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW!
ANSWER ME, HUMAN!
WHERE
YOU STILL HAVEN'T SAID *PLEASE* YET
OR DID I *MISS* THAT?
WHERE *AM* I?
SOMEPLACE YOU DON'T *WANT* TO BE
I AM *KOHT*. I AM GOVERNOR HERE, BY THE WILL OF OUR LORD MORDATH.
WHERE'S *GARETH*?

QUITE NEAR
...AND YET FAR BEYOND YOUR ABILITY TO HELP HIM.
HOW COME SHE GETS A CHAIR?
I DON'T GET A CHAR
LET HIM GO.
THAT WILL NOT HAPPEN.
WE HAVE NEVER PROPERLY MET I AM BOHR.
MORDATH HIMSELF TASKED ME WITH YOUR CAPTURE. I MUST ADMIT YOU VE DONE ADMIRABLY.
YOU'VE MANAGED TO SLIP AWAY FROM ME ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION
BUT THE CHASE HAS COME TO AN END.
WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO WITH US?
YOUR FATES ARE NO LONGER INTERTWINED.
MORDATH DESIRES YOU ALIVE, BOHR WILL DELIVER YOU TO HIM
THIS OTHER

HE WILL BE USEFUL TO ME WHEN HIS *TONGUE* IS PROPERLY LOOSENED.
YOU BOTH HAVE BEEN *WITH* THE REBELLION. I WOULD KNOW WHERE THE REBELS *HIDE*
ONCE I KNOW *THAT*, I WILL *CRUSH* THIS REBELLION AS IF IT HAD NEVER EXISTED
GARETH, *NO!*
YOU *CAN'T* TELL THEM!
I'M NOT TELLING THESE GREEN SKINS A *DAMNED THING!*
BE SILENT.
WHFF!
YOUR FRIEND'S THRESHOLD FOR *PAIN* HAS BEEN IMPRESSIVE.
HE'S BEEN QUITE UNWILLING TO TALK, SAVE TO GIVE MY MEN ANY NUMBER OF SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING THEIR PARENTAGE AS WELL AS CERTAIN BODILY ORIFICES.
BUT WHILE HIS *WILLPOWER* MAY BE ADMIRABLE
MY DUTY HERE IS TO *PUT DOWN* THIS REBELLION.
AND I WILL USE *ANY* MEANS NECESSARY TO DO SO.

LISTEN, ARE WE FINALLY GONNA GET *SERIOUS* ABOUT THIS? BECAUSE I'VE BEEN TORTURED BY SOME OF THE BEST, AND TO BE HONEST WITH YOU.
THESE GUYS OF YOURS ARE *AMATEURS*. NOT MUCH *STYLE*
THEN I'LL TRY NOT TO DISAPPOINT YOU. I *HAVE* HAD...
...SOME EXPERIENCE.
...IN THIS SORT OF THING
LET US *UNDERSTAND* SOMETHING. YOU ARE GOING TO *DIE*. I PROMISE YOU THAT WITH ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY.
YOU ARE GOING TO DIE AND YOU ARE GOING TO TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW. YOU HAVE NO CHOICE IN THIS.
THE ONLY CHOICE YOU HAVE IS HOW MUCH YOU SUFFER BETWEEN NOW AND WHEN I GRANT YOU THAT RELEASE.
THAT CHOICE IS YOURS.
TELL ME WHAT I WISH TO KNOW, AND YOUR DEATH WILL BE QUICK.
DEFY ME, AND IT WILL SEEM ENDLESS.
ARE YOU DONE *TALKING*, SHORTY? BECAUSE I'M READY WHEN YOU—
AARRR!
NOW
TELL ME OF THE REBELS. WHERE IS THEIR LAIR?
CAN'T REMEMBER

Oh, I THINK YOU WILL
GYAAH!
=GHH=
=GHH=
GET BENT
VERY WELL. I CAN BE PATIENT...
...CAN YOU?
AAAHG!
STOP!
STOP, THAT'S ENOUGH!
YOU CANNOT HELP HIM.
...ONLY HE CAN HELP HIMSELF NOW
IS THIS PERHAPS HOW YOU LOST YOUR OTHER EYE?
CARD GAME
SEW NG ACC DENT
RUNN NG W TH SCISSORS
WHERE ARE THE REBELS?
HOW MANY ARE THERE?
WHO IS THIS DAWN WARRIOR THAT LEADS THEM?
HNNGH

WHAT?
BUR A. CHAMBER
DEEP N THE CATACOMBS
I CAN DRAW YOU A MAP
THERE S LESS THAN A HUNDRED OF THEM NCLUD NG WOMEN AND CHILDREN
THE REBELS THOUGHT YOU D BE AFRA D TO LOOK THERE, SO THEY VE BEEN US NG T AS THEIR H D NG PLACE
T S WHERE THEY VE BEEN KEEPING THE R TREASURE AS WELL PLES OF GOLD AND JEWELS
I SWEAR THAT S EVERYTHING I KNOW
Oh, GARETH
YOU GOT WHAT YOU WANTED PLEASE I M NO THREAT TO MORDATH
AT LEAST LET ME GO
HOW CONVENIENTLY DISPOSABLE YOUR LOYALTY IS
NO, I DON'T THINK SO.
I PROMISED YOU YOU'D DIE, AND SO YOU SHALL. I HAVE A SPECIAL END IN MIND FOR YOU.

It was hard for those words to even come out of my mouth
I'd no more leave Arwyn to Mordath's mercies than I could fly.
WHMP
But the trolls didn't know that, so it was worth a try.
KRAK!
I thought if I could get away..
GOVERNOR KOHT SAID THIS IS WHERE THE REBELS WOULD BE ..
...I might be able to come back and free Arwyn before Bohr took her.
Shame it didn't turn out that way
BUT THEY'RE NOT HERE
Bohr was a wild card. We'd assumed he was still following us, but we hadn't guessed he was already in Ankhara.
Everything else had gone as we'd expected.

...including being captured and tortured.
THIS IS JUST AN EMPTY TOMB.
NOT EMPTY.
IT'S TRUE, THERE IS TREASURE HERE
I didn't mind taking the punishment
Much
KEEP YOUR WITS ABOUT YOU, DAMN YOU!
YOU'RE NOT HERE TO LINE YOUR POCKETS!
And I really had been tortured by some of the best.
Feh.
DISGUSTING WAY TO BURY YOUR DEAD
But it had to be convincing.

HRRK!

How else were we going to lead the fools into a trap?

That's really where the Ankharan rebellion took root.

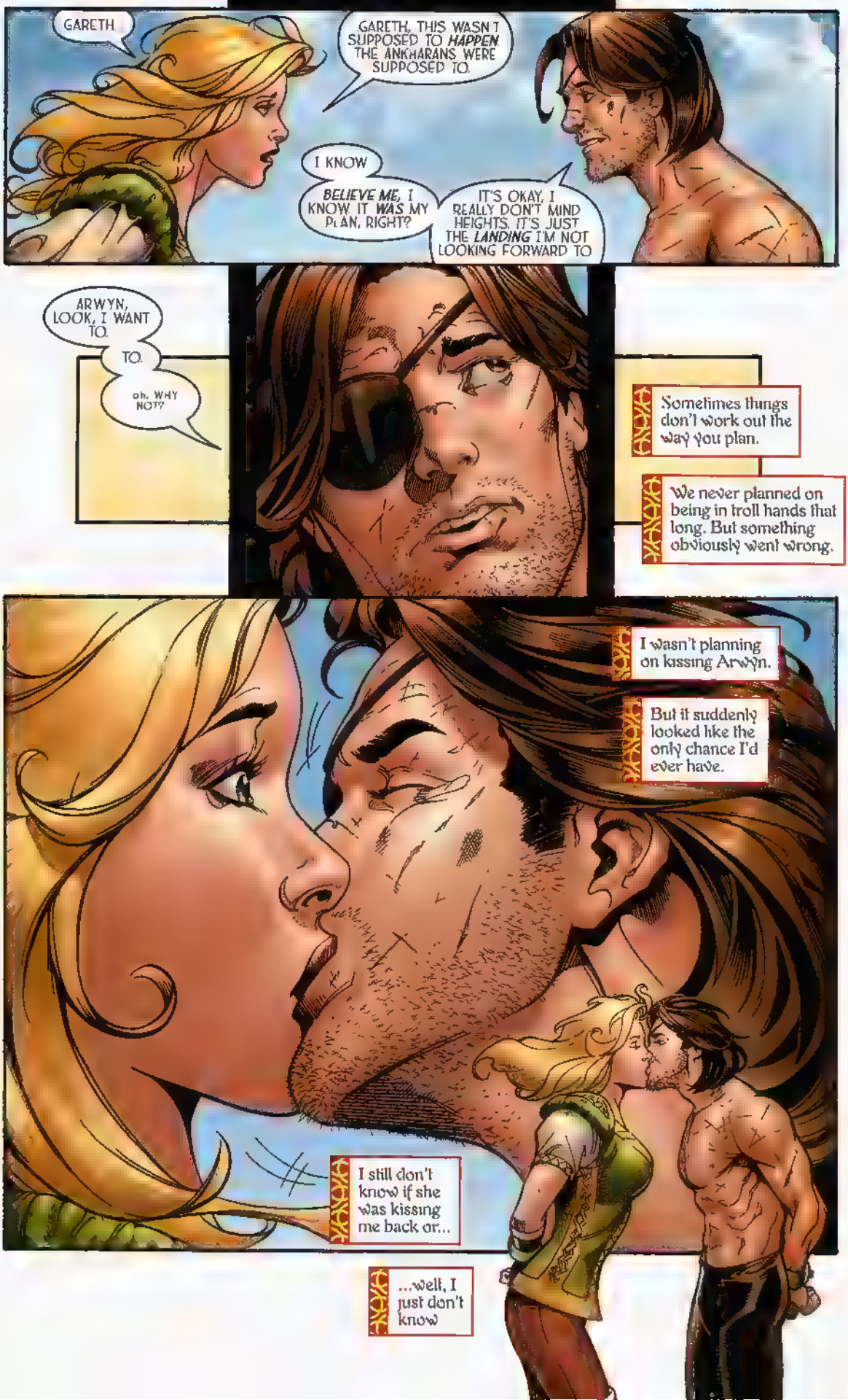
We used the trolls' greed against them. We used their superstitions

Their utter shock at having "the dead" rise up against them gave us the advantage of surprise.

It gave us a chance.

I would've given a lot to see their faces. .

..but unfortunately I was otherwise occupied.
YOU SHARE THE DEATH OF *OTHER* REBELS.
.THOUGH *YOU* DON'T NEED YOUR WINGS CLIPPED.
IT TAKES QUITE SOME TIME TO STRIKE BOTTOM.
I'LL BET
I OWE YOU MY THANKS. I'M SURE MY TROOPS ARE *BUTCHERING* THE REBELS EVEN NOW
Oh, I'M SURE THERE'S BLOOD BEING SPILLED
I'LL JOIN MY MEN SHORTLY BUT I WANTED TO SEE TO YOUR PUNISHMENT *PERSONALLY*.
NICE TO KNOW YOU CARE
IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO *BE* LIKE THIS!


GARETH.
GARETH, THIS WASN'T SUPPOSED TO *HAPPEN*. THE ANKHARANS WERE SUPPOSED TO.
I KNOW.
BELIEVE ME, I KNOW IT *WAS* MY PLAN, RIGHT?
IT'S OKAY, I REALLY DON'T MIND HEIGHTS. IT'S JUST THE *LANDING* I'M NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO.
ARWYN, LOOK, I WANT TO.
TO.
oh. WHY NOT?
Sometimes things don't work out the way you plan.
We never planned on being in troll hands that long. But something obviously went wrong.
I wasn't planning on kissing Arwyn.
But it suddenly looked like the only chance I'd ever have.
I still don't know if she was kissing me back or...
...well, I just don't know

GARETH?
HOW TOUCHING.
...NOW GET RID OF HIM
I can think of worse ways to go than pitched off a cliff. Not many, but a few.
The thing is, I didn't really have any regrets. At least my life had been worthy of a story or two.
But I do wish I'd been around to see how this particular one ended.

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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Bohr

Kohl

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Ayden retreated to the solitude from which he'd come, but broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

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After obtaining the First Fragment in Middelyn, Arwyn and Gareth journeyed to Ankhara, home to a race of winged warriors, where they joined the rebellion against Mordath's occupying trolls. Arwyn and Gareth allowed themselves to be captured in order to lure the trolls into a trap. However, as the trap was sprung and the battle for the city began, Gareth was hurled from the cliffs and Arwyn was given over to her troll pursuer, Bohr.

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CGE

GARETH!

LET GO OF ME!
GARETH!

GARETH!

PULL HER BACK FROM THE EDGE.
I DON'T WANT HER PITCHING HERSELF OFF AFTER HER BOYFRIEND

SHE'S TOO VALUABLE *ALIVE*.
GET HER READY. WE'RE LEAVING
YOU *FILTH!* IT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO *BE* LIKE THIS!
HE *TOLD* YOU WHAT YOU WANTED TO KNOW AND YOU KILLED HIM ANYWAY!
UNTRUE. CAPTAIN BOHR HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR COMPANION'S DEATH.
I ORDERED HIM KILLED AFTER HE REVEALED THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE REBELS. HE WAS NO LONGER OF *USE* TO ME
I'LL SEE YOU *DEAD*, KOHT I SWEAR TO YOU I WILL
I FIND THAT *UNLIKELY*
TAKE AWAY YOUR PRISONER, BOHR. DELIVER HER TO OUR LORD MORDATH WITH MY COMPLIMENTS
I INTEND TO BE GONE AS SOON AS MY MEN AND I CAN SADDLE OUR MOUNTS, GOVERNOR
I WILL TELL MORDATH THE ANKHARAN REBELLION IS BEING CRUSHED
IT WILL *BE* CRUSHED LONG BEFORE YOU REACH MIDDELYN
NOW THAT WE KNOW WHERE THE REBELS HAVE BEEN HIDING

MY TROOPS WILL *SLAUGHTER* EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM

AAGH!

GHRG!

WE ARE LURED INTO A *TRAP!*

RETREAT!

RETR—

HUNT THEM DOWN!

HUNT DOWN OUR OPPRESSORS AND *SLAY* THEM!

EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM

THE TROLLS FLEE BACK TO THE STREETS IN *TERROR*, DAWN WARRIOR

AS WE KNEW THEY WOULD

THE PLAN SUCCEEDS

OUR ALLIES WERE ABLE TO LEAD THE TROLLS TO US

NOW WE MUST FREE *THEM* FROM THE CLUTCHES OF OUR ENEMIES
MIND YOUR *CHARGE*, KNECHT
SHE'D SOONER SLIT YOUR THROAT THAN LOOK AT YOU, AND SHE'S WELL ABLE TO *DO* IT GIVEN HALF A CHANCE
NOW THAT WE FINALLY *HAVE* HER, WE CAN ILL AFFORD TO LOSE HER
IF WE RIDE *HARD* WE CAN BE BACK AT MORDATH'S FORTRESS WITHIN A WEEK AND WE DELIVER NOT ONLY THE *WOMAN* TO OUR MASTER
BUT *AYDEN'S BOW* AS WELL
CAPTAIN, IS THIS TRULY THE—
HLLK!
THUK

ARWYN!
TIYE
WE'RE NOT LEAVING YOU TO THEIR MERCIES
MY BOW!
MAKE SURE MY BOW ISN'T LEFT BEHIND!
WE NEED YOU
AND YOUR WEAPON
STOP THEM!
STOP THEM BEFORE THEY...

WHERE IS THE OTHER?
GARETH
WHERE HAVE YOU *BEEN*?! YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO *RESCUE* US!
KOHT THREW GARETH FROM THE CLIFFS. WE HAVE TO GO *BACK* FOR HIM!
WE HAVE TO GO BACK!
GET AWAY
WE'RE LUCKY TO HAVE FOUND YOU AT ALL. WE MEANT TO REACH YOU SOONER, BUT WE NEVER SUSPECTED KOHT WOULD TAKE YOU TO THE CLIFFS
NO ONE SURVIVES THAT FALL
GARETH MORE THAN ANYONE KNEW THE RISKS OF PERPETRATING THIS RUSE
NO. THERE HAS TO BE A *CHANCE*. HE COULD HAVE –
IF YOUR FRIEND WAS HURLED FROM THE CLIFFS HE IS *DEAD*
GOING BACK TO FIND HIS CORPSE WILL SERVE NO PURPOSE
I'M SORRY, ARWYN
WE HAVE TO RETURN TO THE CITY

THE FINAL BATTLE HAS BEEN JOINED
HOW CAN THIS BE?
FIGHT, YOU FOOLS!
TURN AND FIGHT!
THE DEAD RISE!
THEY TAKE THEIR VENGEANCE!
HRRG!
PEOPLE OF THE SUN!
THE DAWN WARRIOR CALLS YOU!
GHRR

THE DAWN SWORD IS FOUND AND IT IS RAISED!
YOU HAVE CLUNG TO THE HOPE THAT A DAY OF RETRIBUTION WOULD COME!
A DAY OF JUSTICE!
THAT DAY IS HERE!
THE SWORD BURNS BRIGHT, MY PEOPLE!
RISE UP!
RISE UP AND TAKE BACK YOUR CITY! TAKE BACK YOUR FREEDOM!
WE MAKE OUR STAND HERE.
YES, GOVERNOR

RAHM!
ARWYN?
WHERE'S GARETH?
DEAD
YOU DIDN'T REACH US IN TIME
I AM SORRY WE DID TRY
HRUFF
KREEG
I'M HAPPY TO SEE YOU TOO, BOY
I REGRET YOUR FRIEND'S DEATH ARWYN
IT WAS HIS PLAN THAT ALLOWED US THIS OPPORTUNITY
BUT YOU'LL AT LEAST HAVE YOUR CHANCE AT REVENGE
YES

I WILL
HAVE THAT

THE STREETS RUN *RED* WITH YOUR BLOOD YOUR *DEAD* LITTER THE GROUND

"WHILE MY PEOPLE FLY FREE THE BATTLE IS ENDED"
AND OUR CITY AGAIN BELONGS TO US
YOU ARE THE ONE?
YOU ARE THIS DAWN WARRIOR WHO LEADS THEM?
I AM
I AM THE PROTECTOR OF MY PEOPLE I AM THE BANE OF OUR ENEMIES
MY MEN ARE DEAD BUT THIS IS NOT YET OVER...
NOT WHILE I STILL DRAW BREATH
I WON'T BEG FOR YOUR MERCY
I WASN'T OFFERING IT

CHANG
GF!
GYAAH!

FINISH IT.
THIS IS MERELY A BEGINNING

THE FRAGMENT
HIDDEN WITHIN THE DAWN SWORD'S *HILT* ALE THIS TIME
THIS *IS* WHAT YOU WERE SEEKING
YES
YOU AIDED US WHEN IT WOULD HAVE BEEN FAR EASIER FOR YOU TO MOVE ON
IN *SETTING ASIDE* YOUR QUEST, YOU GAINED THE *OBJECT* OF YOUR QUEST
INDEED, YOU ARE THE *FAVORED* OF THE GODS
THIS IS *YOURS*
BUT
IF AYDEN'S FRAGMENT GAVE THE DAWN SWORD ITS *POWER*
NO
THE FRAGMENT MUST HAVE BEEN PLACED WITHIN THE HILT MERELY TO *SAFEGUARD* IT
THE DAWN SWORD WAS A POWERFUL WEAPON EVEN BEFORE THE FRAGMENT EXISTED
A NEW HILT WILL BE MADE FOR THE BLADE, AND IT WILL BE AS IT ALWAYS WAS
PLEASE
TAKE THE FRAGMENT
THANK YOU
ALL I COST WAS GARETH'S FE

I GRIEVE THAT YOUR FRIEND WAS LOST HE HAS BEEN AVENGED
BUT I KNOW THAT DOES NOT LESSEN YOUR PAIN
YOU CAN STAY WITH US, ARWYN WE DO NOT ACCEPT OUTSIDERS EASILY, BUT YOU HAVE EARNED A PLACE HERE
NOW THAT WE HAVE TAKEN OUR LAND'S CAPITAL, THE REBELLION CAN SPREAD TO OTHER CITIES IN ANKHARA YOU WOULD BE A BOON TO OUR CAUSE
I'M FLATTERED THAT YOUR PEOPLE WOULD ACCEPT ME, RAHM BUT I SWORE I WOULD SEE MORDATH DESTROYED
AND I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT WILL HAPPEN BY SIMPLE INSURRECTION
I MUST CONTINUE MY QUEST, NOW MORE THAN EVER I HAVE TWO OF THE FIVE FRAGMENTS.
BUT EACH WAS BOUGHT WITH A LIFE
THEN CAN ONE OF MY WARRIORS ACCOMPANY YOU?
IT'S THE LEAST WE OWE YOU
I APPRECIATE YOUR KINDNESS RAHM
BUT THUS FAR THOSE WHO HAVE HELPED ME HAVE COME TO DIRE ENDS I WON'T DOOM ANY OTHERS TO THAT FATE
I'LL STAY IN ANKHARA ONLY LONG ENOUGH TO GATHER SUPPLIES AND FIND A MOUNT THEN I CONTINUE SOUTH TOWARD OUDUBAI
THIS QUEST MUST BE MINE

AND MINE
ALONE

REPORT
THE CITY IS *LOST*, MY CAPTAIN
THE REBELS HAVE SLAIN NEARLY *ALL* OF THE OCCUPIERS, INCLUDING GOVERNOR KOHT
I BARELY MANAGED TO ESCAPE WITH MY LIFE
IT WAS WISE OF YOU TO KEEP OUR FORCE OUTSIDE THE WALLS *WE* SURELY WOULD HAVE BEEN SLAUGHTERED AS WELL
WHAT NOW? WHAT OF OUR *QUARRY?*
BOUND FOR OUDUBAI, I'M CERTAIN
SHE'LL DEPART VIA THE CITY'S SOUTH GATE SHE LIKELY ALREADY *HAS.*
WE'LL HAVE TO FIND A WAY AROUND THE WOMAN WILL GAIN *DAYS* ON US
BUT THE *CHASE* IS FAR FROM OVER

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Arwyn

Kreeg

Mordath

Neven

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After obtaining the First Fragment in Middelyn, Arwyn and Gareth journeyed to Ankhara, home to a race of winged warriors, where they joined the rebellion against Mordath's occupying trolls. The rebellion was successful in reclaiming Ankhara City, but Gareth perished in the effort. With the second Fragment in her possession, a heavy-hearted Arwyn has resumed her quest once again.

Sojourn® Vol. 1 Issue 19. FEBRUARY 2003 FIRST PRINTING. Published by CG Entertainment Inc. Office of publication: 4023 Tampa Road Suite 2400 Oldsmar Florida 34677 **Sojourn®**, **CrossGen®**, **CrossGen Comics®**, **CrossGeneration® CrossGeneration Comics®**, and the **CrossGen sigil®** are registered trademarks of CrossGeneration Comics Inc. The **CG Entertainment logo™** and all prominent **Sojourn®** characters and images are Trademark and Copyright 2003 CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. The stories, incidents and characters in this publication are fictional. Any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reproduced in any form without the express written consent of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. PRINTED IN CANADA

This is a tale of the past. Not the distant past, though there are many such stories to tell. No, this is a tale of recent years, a time before Mordath's shadow fell across the Five Lands of Quin, a time when the people did not live in the grip of fear.

In those days, Middelyn was the mightiest of the Five Lands. The seat of royal power was Iseaunon, where the Palace of Ages sprawled upon a hilltop overlooking the city. It's gone now, of course. All gone. But once it was glorious, truly a thing to behold.

The protectors of the monarchy were the Royal Archers, culled from the most skilled marksmen in all Middelyn. And among them was Arwyn, recently arrived from Gerrindor, the city of artisans. She was a different woman then, bright with the hopefulness of youth and unmarked by the tragedies ahead of her.

Only a few years Arwyn's senior, but already a captain, was Darian. He had risen quickly through the ranks, distinguished by his heroism in the Grinbor border wars. They knew little of one another when they were paired and sent from Iseaunon, undertaking a task on the command of King Norgard himself.

They rode north, to the town of Henredon, where a series of killings held the people in the grip of fear each time the sun dipped below the hills. At first, only livestock had been taken, cattle and hogs butchered in their fields. But in recent weeks men had become the prey and the town elders were powerless to find a culprit, much less stop the slaughter.

Darian and Arwyn examined the most recent victim, a cooper whose body had been found the previous night, his corpse so hideously savaged that he could be recognized only by his wedding band. The wounds suggested the work of an animal, but what animal could be so clever as to remain unseen and leave no trace of its passing?

Some suggested a maniac loose in the woods. Others, a witch engaged in dark and bloody rites. An old man called Orvin recalled an autumn of his long-ago youth when the same savagery had been visited upon Henredon. Then, as now, he claimed, the atrocities were the product of a Dread Wolf, an evil creature possessed of a man's cunning and a great wolf's shape and ferocity.

And then, as now, the creature went uncaught. But Dread Wolves are said to be the stuff of gaffers' tales, not flesh-and-blood creatures. Darian and Arwyn ventured into the countryside, paying particular attention to the thick forests north of the town. Yet for all their searching, they found nothing save a wood unnaturally still and silent.

Finally, at the edge of one of the tributaries that fed Henredon's river, they came upon the faint tracks of a great beast, footprints larger than those of any creature that might usually roam the area. Of the beast itself there was no sign. The archers had no notion that even as they stalked their prey, they too were being stalked.

Their search fruitless, Arwyn and Darian returned to Henredon as darkness fell and doors were bolted and windows shuttered. And in the small hours, perhaps intending to hunt the hunters, the killer struck again within the very streets of the city. Discovered hunkered over its victim, the creature was a wolf larger than anyever seen or remembered–the Dread Wolf of legend.

Darian and Arwyn pursued their quarry into the rain-swept and moonless night, overtaking it at the river's edge. Though Darian's mount was slain in the struggle, the archers felled the beast, riddling it with shafts until it loosed a final howl and moved no more. It was not lost upon Darian that Arwyn, not he, had delivered the killing arrow.

The Royal Archers were hailed as heroes, saviors who had delivered Henredon from its nightmare of blood and darkness. The beast's hide was hung upon the wall as a trophy, and a celebration equal parts relief and triumph swept the town. But any sense of triumph, or relief, would be short-lived.

Only a day later, Orvin, the old man whose warning of a Dread Wolf had been ignored as legend, was found torn apart in the harvested, brittle fields to the east. Death still stalked Henredon, almost assuredly another Dread Wolf, perhaps the mate to that which now adorned a tavern wall.

Fear's shroud again descended upon the people. They gathered in the square and demanded action from the town elders. They demanded the protection the Royal Archers had promised. Anything but waiting to see which of them would be the next to be culled, like sheep from a herd.

The slain Dread Wolf's boldness had been its undoing. If its twin chose to remain cautious, finding the creature's lair could be nigh impossible. While the men argued and accused, Arwyn turned her attention to the pelt they'd already taken. She found traces of grease and wheat chaff in the thick, coarse hair, telltale signs leading to an obvious conclusion.

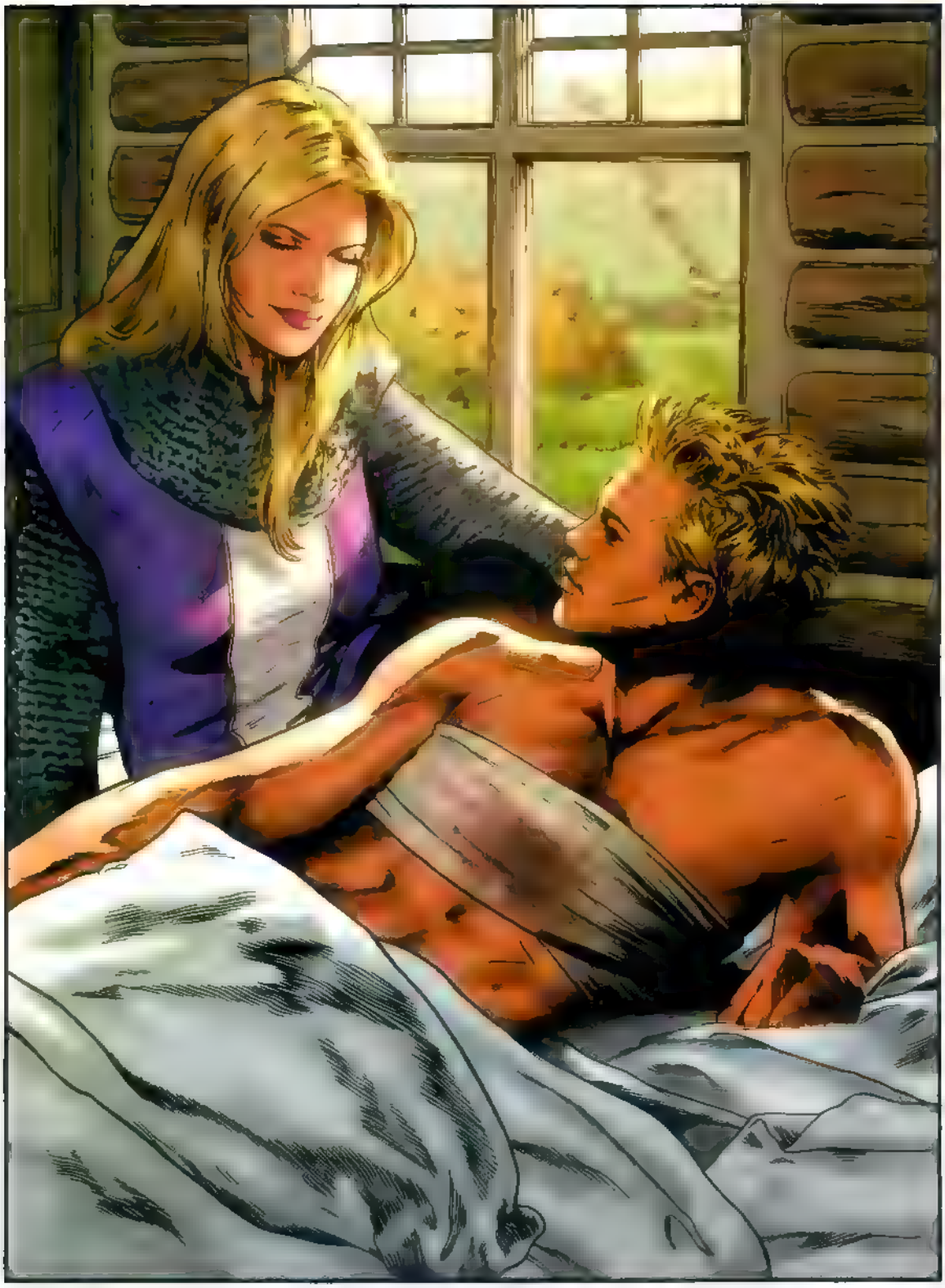
The mill to the north of Henredon had once turned harvests into grain to be stored for harsh winters. But it had been abandoned for a generation, now standing empty and rotting. Arwyn and Darian approached on foot, hoping to surprise the beast they believed waited within, hurrying before darkness gave it greater advantage.

What they found was far deadlier than they ever could have expected. The mill was home to an entire pack of Dread Wolves, their den surrounded by the remains of those who had become their prey. Slumbering in the early evening, the Wolves stirred, their red, baleful eyes gleaming in the gloom.

It had taken both Arwyn and Darian to slay a single Dread Wolf, and even that had been a near thing. Facing half a dozen such creatures in the dim confines of the mill was more akin to suicide. Once arrows were expended, swords were drawn. The walls echoed with a wild din of roars of rage and screams of pain.

And then silence. The Dread Wolves lay dead, but the cost appeared to be Darian's life. He bled from a dozen wounds, some of them grievous, his life measured in heartbeats. Arwyn stanched the bleeding, bound the worst of his injuries, and carried him back to Henredon, terribly afraid of losing this man she hardly knew.

The mill was put to the torch and burned to the ground, though neither Arwyn nor Darian took much notice of it. She stayed at his bedside, watching over him, refusing even sleep. When his eyes opened, hers was the first face he saw. They'd been sent to find a killer. They also found each other.



When Darian had healed enough for the journey, they set out for Iseaunon, lovers returning where soldiers had departed. They married, staying on as Archers until they returned to Gerrindor when Arwyn learned she carried a child. The happiness they knew then, of course, eventually would turn to tragedy.

But it was there, in that small town, that Arwyn took the first steps on the path she now walks. Having sworn to bring about Mordath's destruction, she already has gathered two of the Fragments in her search for Ayden's Arrow. Now she moves southward toward Oudubai in search of the third. Hers is a quest that bears watching.

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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Kreeg

Mordath

Neven

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Ayden retreated to the solitude from which he'd come, but broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb. Aided by a sigil that allows him to create and command fire, Mordath has again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments at the behest of a mysterious and apparently magical woman calling herself Neven. Armed with Ayden's bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn has dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

After finding the First Fragment in Middelyn, Arwyn and Gareth journeyed to Ankhara. Arwyn was successful in obtaining the Second Fragment, but the cost was Gareth's life. A heavy-hearted Arwyn has resumed her quest once again, pushing south toward Oudubai.

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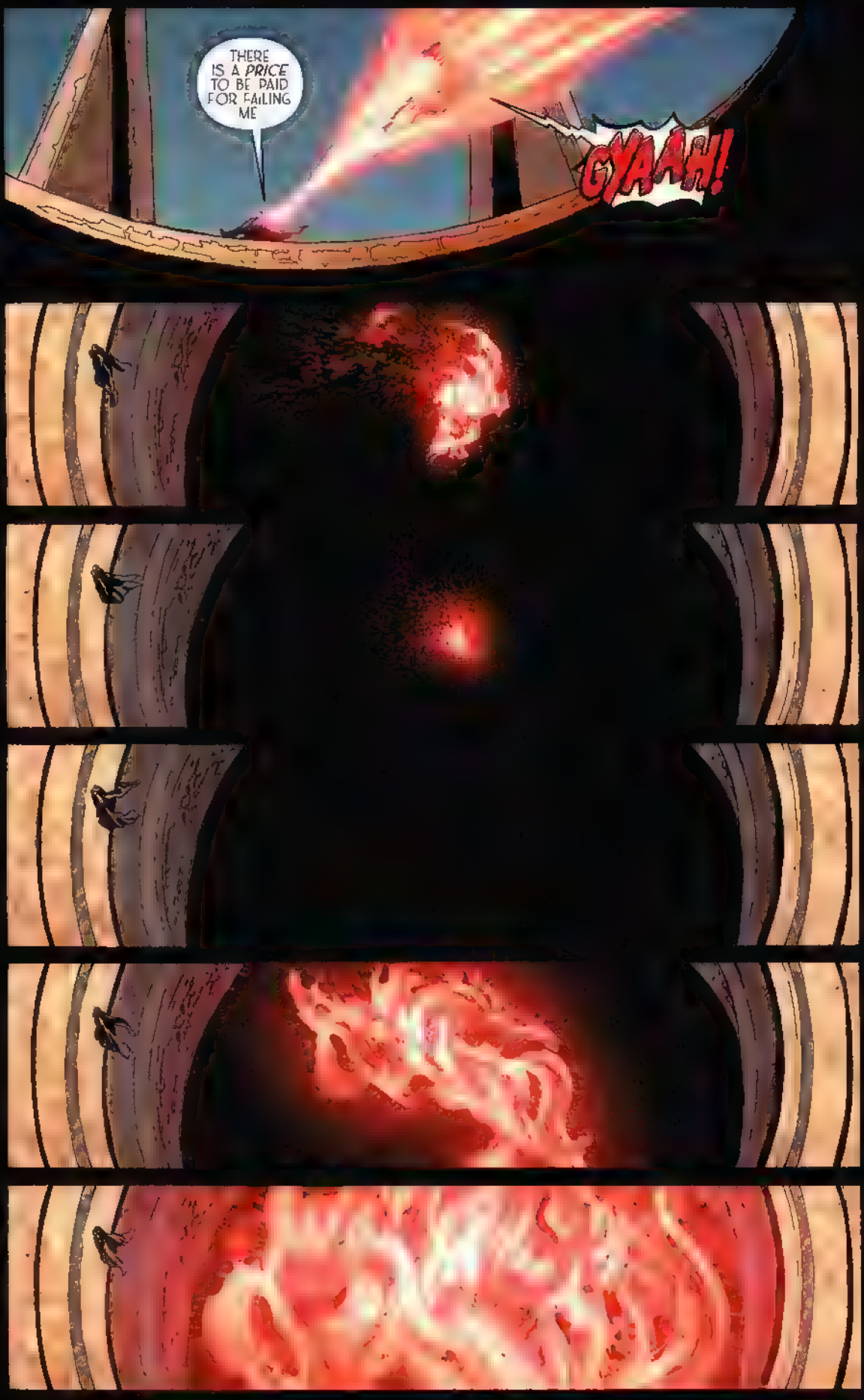
'THE RECONSTRUCTION OF OUR LORD'S FORTRESS HAS PROCEEDED QUICKLY...'

..BUT THERE'S STILL MUCH TO BE DONE TO ERASE THE DAMAGE WROUGHT BY THE DRAGON
THIS TOWER IS HIGHER AND MIGHTIER THAN THE LAST.
A FITTING MONUMENT TO THE MAJESTY OF OUR LORD
IT *WILL* BE, WHEN HE SETS THE FLAME ABLAZE SO THAT THE FIVE LANDS KNOW THEIR RULER REMAINS UNBOWED
YOU REALIZE THE NEWS YOU BEAR WILL NOT BE *WELCOME*.
I UNDERSTAND BUT I VOLUNTEERED TO DELIVER THIS MESSAGE.
I OWE CAPTAIN BOHR MY LIFE MANY TIMES OVER
THAT IS ADMIRABLE.
BECAUSE WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO DO MAY WELL BE *WORTH* YOUR LIFE.
MY LORD, I.
..ah...

...I BRING NEWS FROM ANKHARA, LORD MORDATH.
FROM CAPTAIN BOHR
AND?

AND...
...THE NEWS IS *ILL*, MY LORD.
AS YOU COMMANDED, WE FOLLOWED THE WOMAN *ARWYN* ACROSS MIDDELYN AND INTO ANKHARA
SHE AIDED THE REBELLION IN ANKHARA CITY, AND THE REBELS RETOOK THE CITY IN BATTLE. YOUR GOVERNOR WAS SLAIN...
...AS WERE MOST OF THE OCCUPYING TROOPS. THE REBELLION IS LIKELY TO SPREAD TO *OTHER* CITIES IN ANKHARA.
ARWYN'S COMPANION, THE ONE CALLED GARETH, WAS SLAIN, BUT THE WOMAN HERSELF ESCAPED
CAPTAIN BOHR AND THE REST OF THE DETACHMENT TURNED SOUTH TO OUDUBAI TO PICK UP HER TRAIL
I AM SORRY, MY LORD.
WE FAILED YOU IN THIS
Uh...
...MY LORD?
I WAS BORN IN MIDDELYN NOT OF NOBLE BLOOD, CERTAINLY JUST A MAN, LIKE MOST OTHERS.
AND, AS MOST MEN DO, I TOOK A *WIFE* YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT, DID YOU?
I TOOK A WIFE AND WE LIVED OFF THE LAND. OUR FARM TUCKED AWAY IN A GREEN VALLEY
BUT MEN ARE *JEALOUS* CREATURES

WE LIVED IN *PEACE*, MY WIFE AND I, UNTIL A SPRING DAY WHEN *RIDERS* CAME TO OUR HOME THEY WERE ROUGH MEN MEN OF VIOLENCE
OUR CROPS WERE BURNED, OUR HOME WAS BURNED, AND WHEN THEY FINALLY SLIT MY WIFE'S THROAT, IT WAS A *MERCY*
I WAS LEFT FOR DEAD
BETTER I *HAD* DIED
NIGHT HAD LONG SINCE FALLEN BY THE TIME I CRAWLED FROM THE BURNING WRECKAGE THAT HAD BEEN MY HOME
THAT HAD BEEN MY *LIFE*
I DID NOT *SET OUT* FOR GRIMBOR. I SIMPLY WANDERED ACROSS ITS BORDERS IN MY DELIRIUM
BUT *YOUR* PEOPLE FOUND ME AND TOOK ME IN NURSED ME BACK TO HEALTH
THE RACE MY PEOPLE HAD PAINTED AS MONSTERS WERE FAR MORE *HUMAN* TOWARD ME THAN MY OWN KIND
EVENTUALLY I ROSE TO *LEAD* THE TROLL CLANS, AND FORGED BITTER ENEMIES INTO AN ARMY MIGHTY ENOUGH TO CONQUER THE FIVE LANDS
MIGHTY ENOUGH THAT I COULD *PUNISH* THIS WORLD FOR THE PUNISHMENTS IT HAD INFLICTED UPON ME
THAT WAS THREE CENTURIES AGO.
NOW, OF COURSE, I HAVE BEEN GIVEN ANOTHER CHANCE AT .
WELL, WOULD YOU CALL THIS WITHERED SHELL *LIFE?*
I HAVE LOST *MUCH*. I TOLERATE *NO ONE* WHO ENDANGERS THOSE MEAGER THINGS THAT I HAVE GAINED.
PLEASE, MY LORD. .
...PLEASE

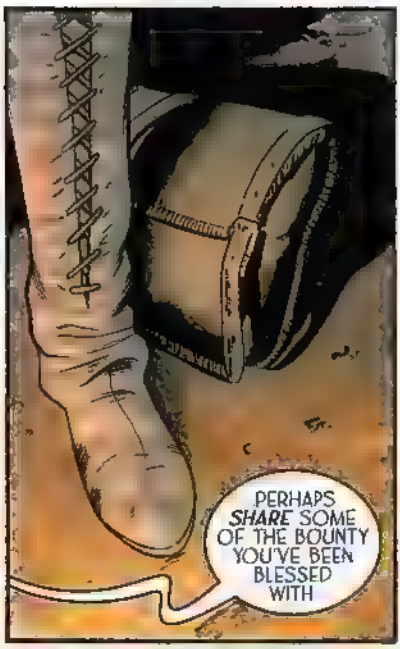

THERE IS A PRICE TO BE PAID FOR FAILING ME
GYAAH!

HALK
YES, LORD
DISPATCH MORE TROOPS TO ANKHARA. WE WILL ALSO NEED TO SELECT A NEW *GOVERNOR*
YES, LORD
I AM NOT PLEASED THE WOMAN CONTINUES TO EVADE CAPTURE
AND CAPTAIN BOHR *DISAPPOINTS* ME PERHAPS HE IS NOT THE EQUAL OF THE TASK I PLACED BEFORE HIM.
I FEAR I MUST DEVOTE *PERSONAL* ATTENTION TO THIS WOMAN

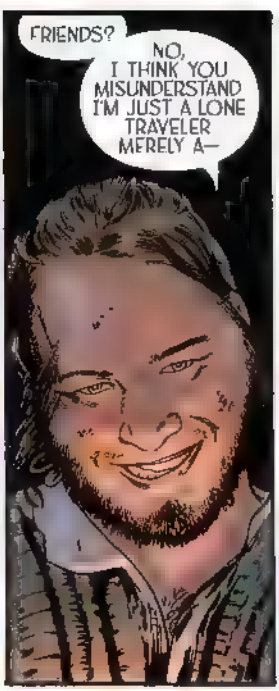
" WHEREVER SHE MIGHT BE "
HWUFF
I HEARD IT TOO, BOY
YOU MIGHT AS WELL SHOW YOURSELF

HAS QUITE THE KEEN HEARING, *DOESN'T* HE? MUST BE A GOOD WATCHDOG
I DIDN'T MEAN TO SURPRISE YOU I SAW YOUR FIRE FROM THE ROAD
IS THAT SO?

UNSEASONABLY CHILL FOR THIS TIME OF YEAR HOPE YOU DON'T MIND ME WARMING MY BONES A LITTLE
THESE ARE HARD DAYS, *ESPECIALLY* SO SINCE MORDATH'S SHADOW EXTENDS THIS FAR SOUTH
EVEN INTO OUDUBAI
I WAS HOPING A TRAVELER SUCH AS YOURSELF WOULD PROVIDE SOME FELLOWSHIP

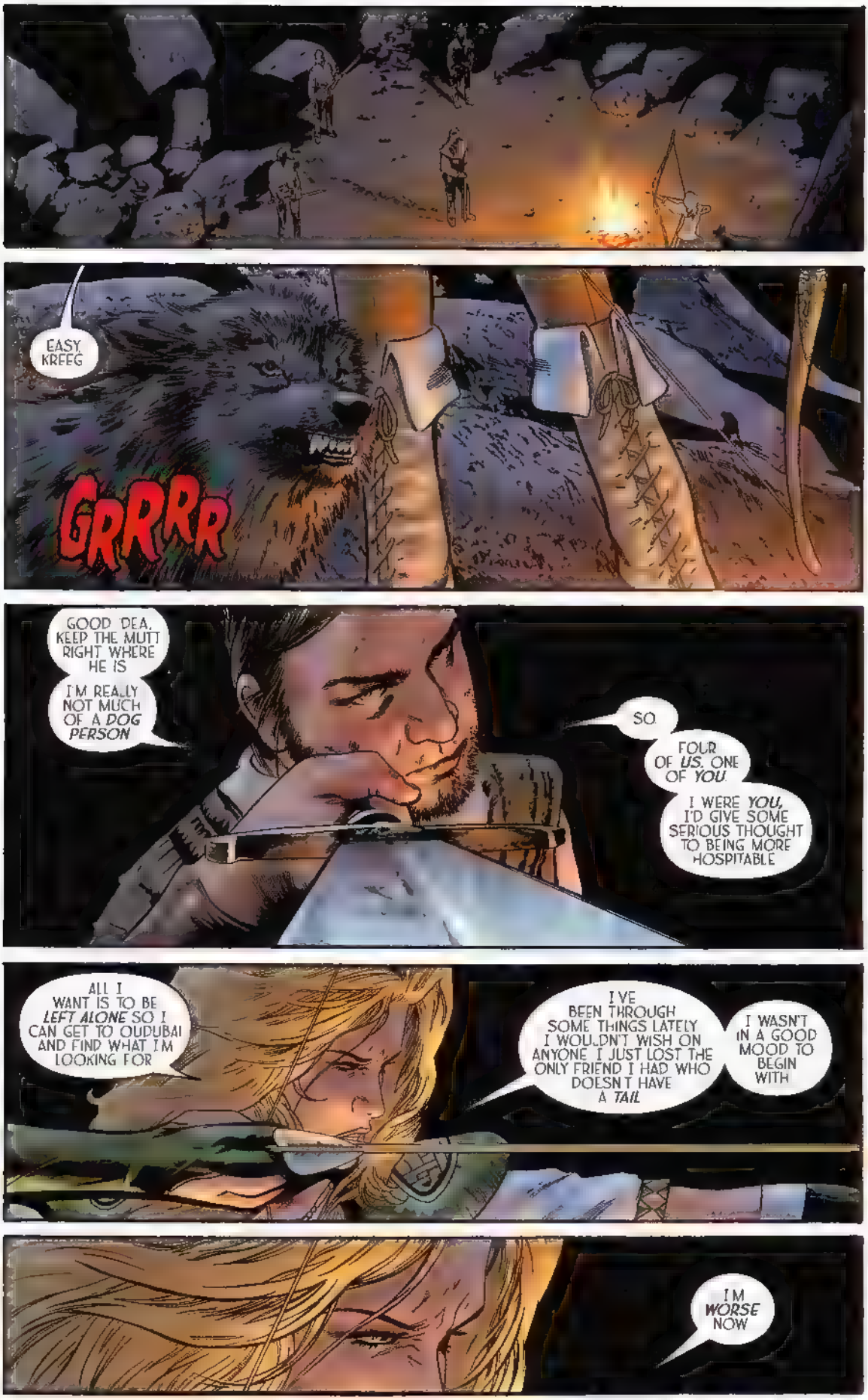

PERHAPS *SHARE* SOME OF THE BOUNTY YOU'VE BEEN BLESSED WITH

WHY DON'T YOU TELL THE *REST* OF YOUR FRIENDS TO STEP INTO THE LIGHT?


FRIENDS?
NO, I THINK YOU MISUNDERSTAND I'M JUST A LONE TRAVELER MERELY A—

TELL THEM

GENTLEMEN

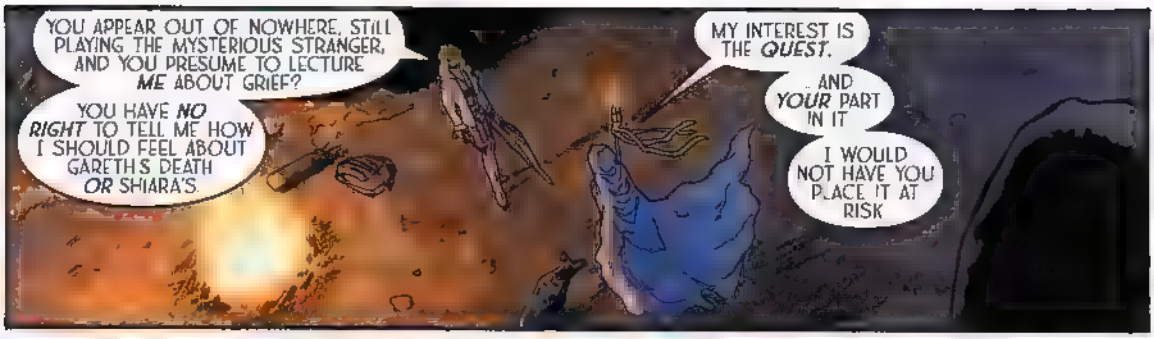

EASY, KREEG
GRRRR
GOOD IDEA. KEEP THE MUTT RIGHT WHERE HE IS
I'M REALLY NOT MUCH OF A *DOG* PERSON
SO.
FOUR OF *US*, ONE OF *YOU*
I WERE *YOU*, I'D GIVE SOME SERIOUS THOUGHT TO BEING MORE HOSPITABLE
ALL I WANT IS TO BE *LEFT ALONE* SO I CAN GET TO OUDUBAI AND FIND WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR
I'VE BEEN THROUGH SOME THINGS LATELY I WOULDN'T WISH ON ANYONE. I JUST LOST THE ONLY FRIEND I HAD WHO DOESN'T HAVE A *TAIL*
I WASN'T IN A GOOD MOOD TO BEGIN WITH
I'M *WORSE* NOW

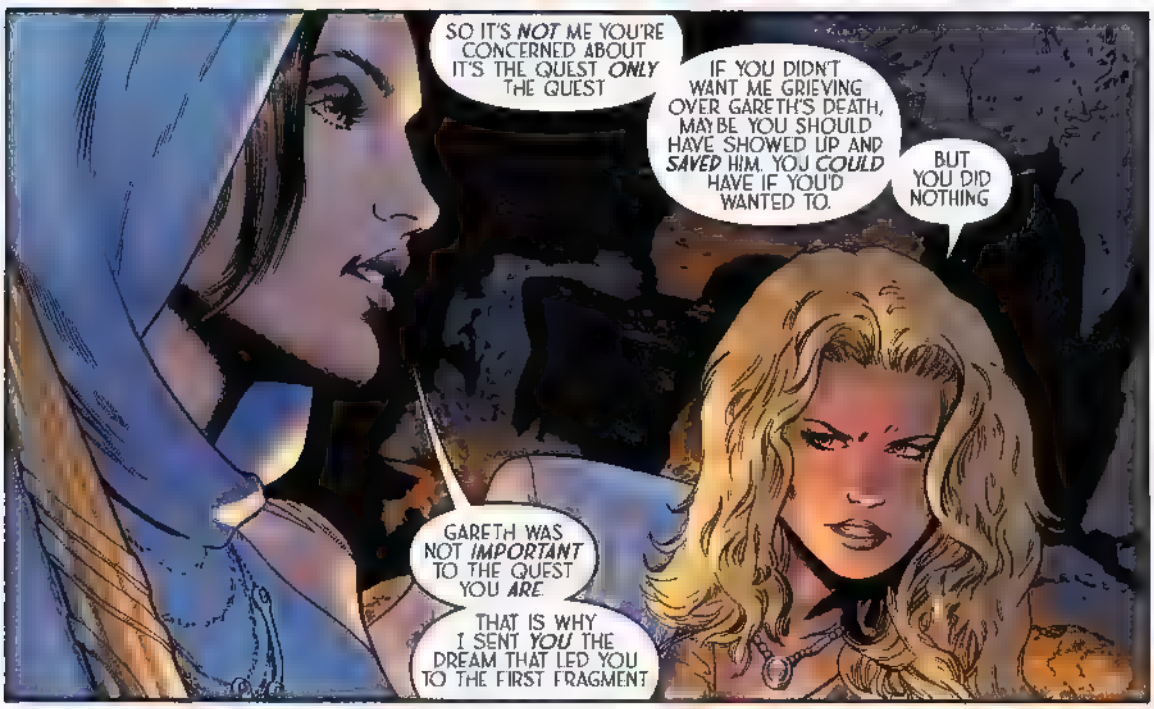
YOU REALLY THINK ONE WOMAN WITH A BOW PRESENTS MUCH OF A THREAT TO FOUR MEN?
I DON'T
YOU'VE HAD YOUR WARNING
TRY ME
BOYS.
TAKE HER
YOU MISSED
NO I DIDN'T

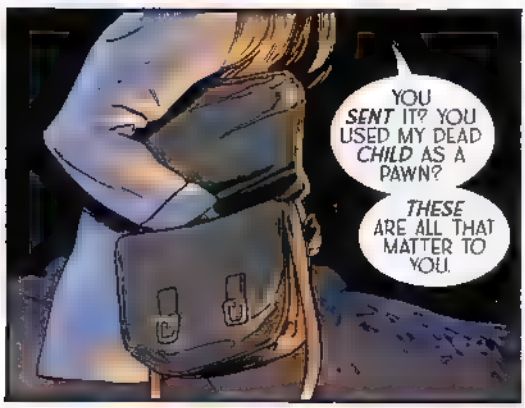
AAAH!
WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS ONE WILL DO TO YOU?
Nnnh
TELL THE OTHERS TO STAND DOWN, OR WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT
YES, YES, ALL RIGHT
STOP!
FOR AYDEN'S SAKE, STOP!
YOU REALLY WOULD, WOULDN'T YOU?
ABSOLUTELY
NEXT TIME THERE WON'T BE A WARNING SHOT I DON'T WANT TO SEE ANY OF YOU AGAIN
EVER.
YOU WON'T! I SWEAR!

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE
THIS ONE'S CRAZY
NOT QUITE THE WAY WE WERE PLANNING TO SPEND THE EVENING, huh, KREEG?
WHEN WE'RE SURE THEY'RE GONE WE CAN GET SOME—
DON'T MOVE

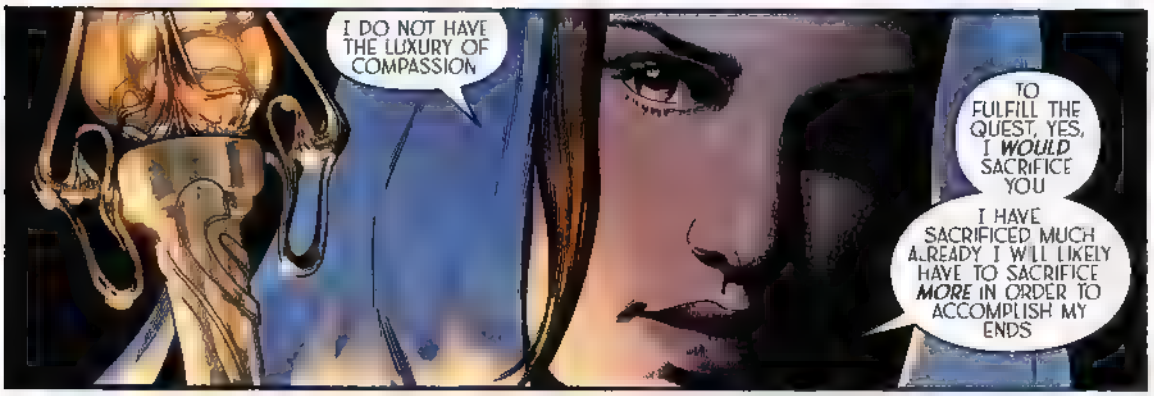
ARE YOU SO READY TO SHOOT FRIEND AS WELL AS FOE?
FRIEND" THAT'S A GOOD ONE
COME FOR THE *BOW* AGAIN NEVEN?
NO.
FOR *YOU*.
ME?
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
I AM CONCERNED FOR YOU, ARWYN.
THE GRIEF OF RECENT EVENTS THREATENS TO *CONSUME* YOU THAT MUST NOT HAPPEN


YOU APPEAR OUT OF NOWHERE, STILL PLAYING THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER, AND YOU PRESUME TO LECTURE *ME* ABOUT GRIEF?
YOU HAVE *NO RIGHT* TO TELL ME HOW I SHOULD FEEL ABOUT GARETH'S DEATH *OR* SHIARA'S.
MY INTEREST IS THE *QUEST*.
.. AND *YOUR* PART IN IT
I WOULD NOT HAVE YOU PLACE IT AT RISK


SO IT'S *NOT* ME YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT IT'S THE QUEST *ONLY* THE QUEST
IF YOU DIDN'T WANT ME GRIEVING OVER GARETH'S DEATH, MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE SHOWED UP AND *SAVED* HIM. YOU *COULD* HAVE IF YOU'D WANTED TO.
BUT YOU DID NOTHING
GARETH WAS NOT *IMPORTANT* TO THE QUEST YOU *ARE*.
THAT IS WHY I SENT *YOU* THE DREAM THAT LED YOU TO THE FIRST FRAGMENT


YOU *SENT* IT? YOU USED MY DEAD *CHILD* AS A PAWN?
THESE ARE ALL THAT MATTER TO YOU.

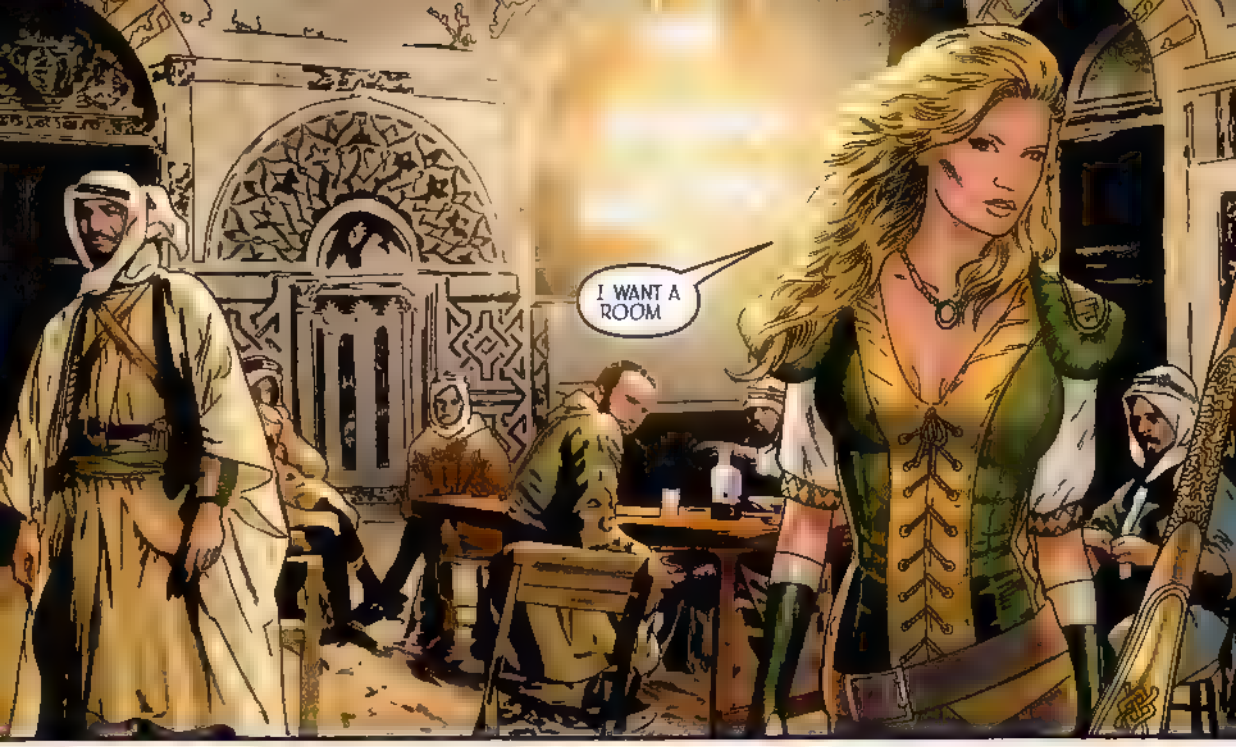
THESE FRAGMENTS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN *LIVES* TO YOU, AREN'T THEY? YOU'D EVEN TRADE *MY* LIFE
ISN'T THERE *ANY* COMPASSION IN YOU?

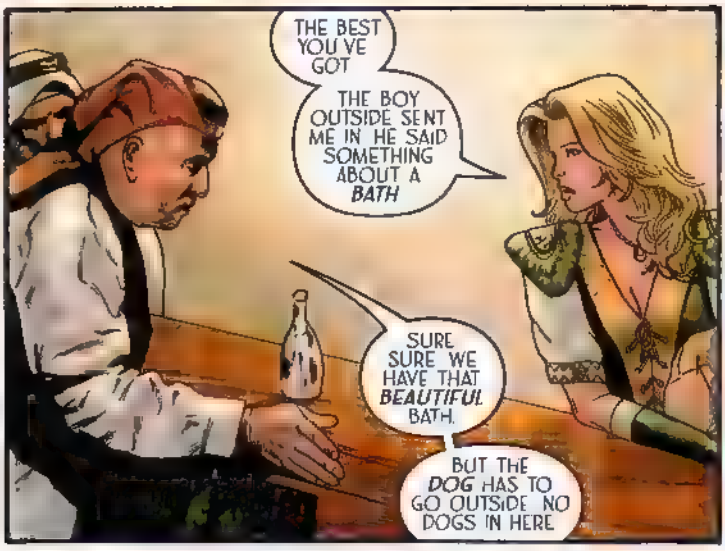

I DO NOT HAVE THE LUXURY OF COMPASSION
TO FULFILL THE QUEST, YES, I *WOULD* SACRIFICE YOU
I HAVE SACRIFICED MUCH ALREADY. I WILL LIKELY HAVE TO SACRIFICE *MORE* IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH MY ENDS

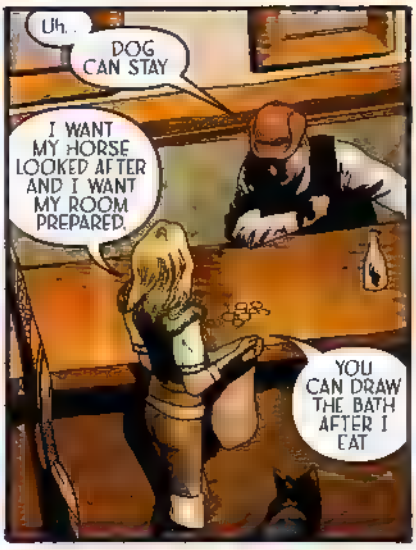
DAMN YOU!
I WON'T BE A PUPPET!
REMEMBER WHAT I'VE TOLD YOU, ARWYN. DO NOT LET YOUR HEART BECOME INVOLVED IN THIS
YOU CANNOT AFFORD IT
AND NEITHER AM
COME ON, KREEG
LET'S GET SOME SLEEP

WE'VE GOT A WHOLE DAY'S RIDE UNTIL WE REACH ALDINAL

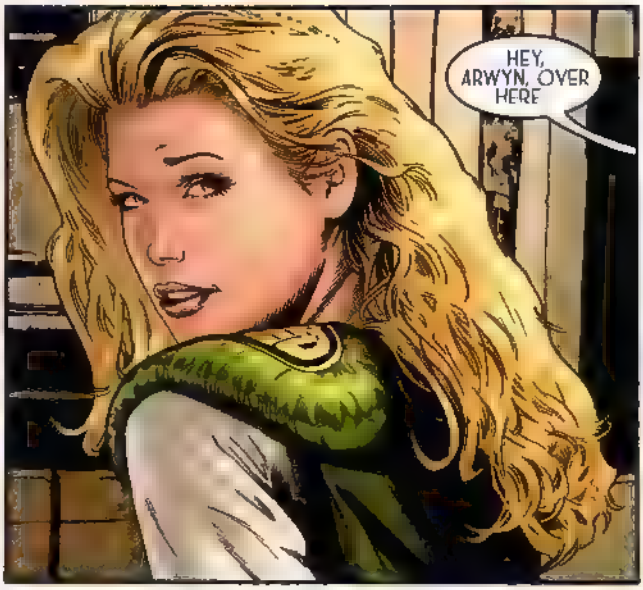
DATES! NUTS! DELICIOUS FRUITS!
THIEF!
CAMELS! THE FINEST IN ALL OUDUBA!!
STEP INSIDE AND SEE!
YES *LOVELY*, ISN'T SHE?
EXQUISITE RUGS!
TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH
FIFTEEN
FIFTEEN? *FIFTEEN?!* CAN YOU NOT SEE THE QUALITY?
SIXTEEN
PRETTY LADY!
YOU MUST STOP AT THE INN OF BEN-GAZEB, PRETTY LADY!
THE MOST LUXURIOUS BATHS IN THE CITY!
A *BATH?*
KEEP TALKING
HERE THE INN OF BEN-GAZEB
THIS PLACE?
YES, YES. GO INSIDE AND TELL THEM I SENT YOU
BUT YOU MUST LEAVE THE *DOG* OUTSIDE THE DOG WILL NOT BE WELCOME
IS THERE A STABLE?
IN THE BACK, YES.
THEN TAKE MY HORSE THERE. SEE THAT HE'S WELL FED AND WATERED.
AND THERE'S AN *EXTRA* COIN IN IT FOR YOU
THIS WAY, KREEG


I WANT A ROOM


THE BEST YOU'VE GOT
THE BOY OUTSIDE SENT ME IN HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT A *BATH*
SURE SURE WE HAVE THAT *BEAUTIFUL* BATH.
BUT THE *DOG* HAS TO GO OUTSIDE NO DOGS IN HERE


Uh..
DOG CAN STAY
I WANT MY HORSE LOOKED AFTER AND I WANT MY ROOM PREPARED.
YOU CAN DRAW THE BATH AFTER I EAT

AT ONCE, KIND LADY!
IF THERE IS ANYTHING ELSE I CAN PROVIDE, ANYTHING AT ALL, DON'T HESITATE TO—
ARWYN?


HEY, ARWYN, OVER HERE

I WAS WONDERING WHEN YOU'D SHOW UP

GARETH?
GARETH
OWF!
I CAN EXPLAIN, YOU KNOW

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WRITER

Greg LAND
PENCILER

Jay LEISTEN
INKER

Justin PONSOR
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LETTERER

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Arwyn
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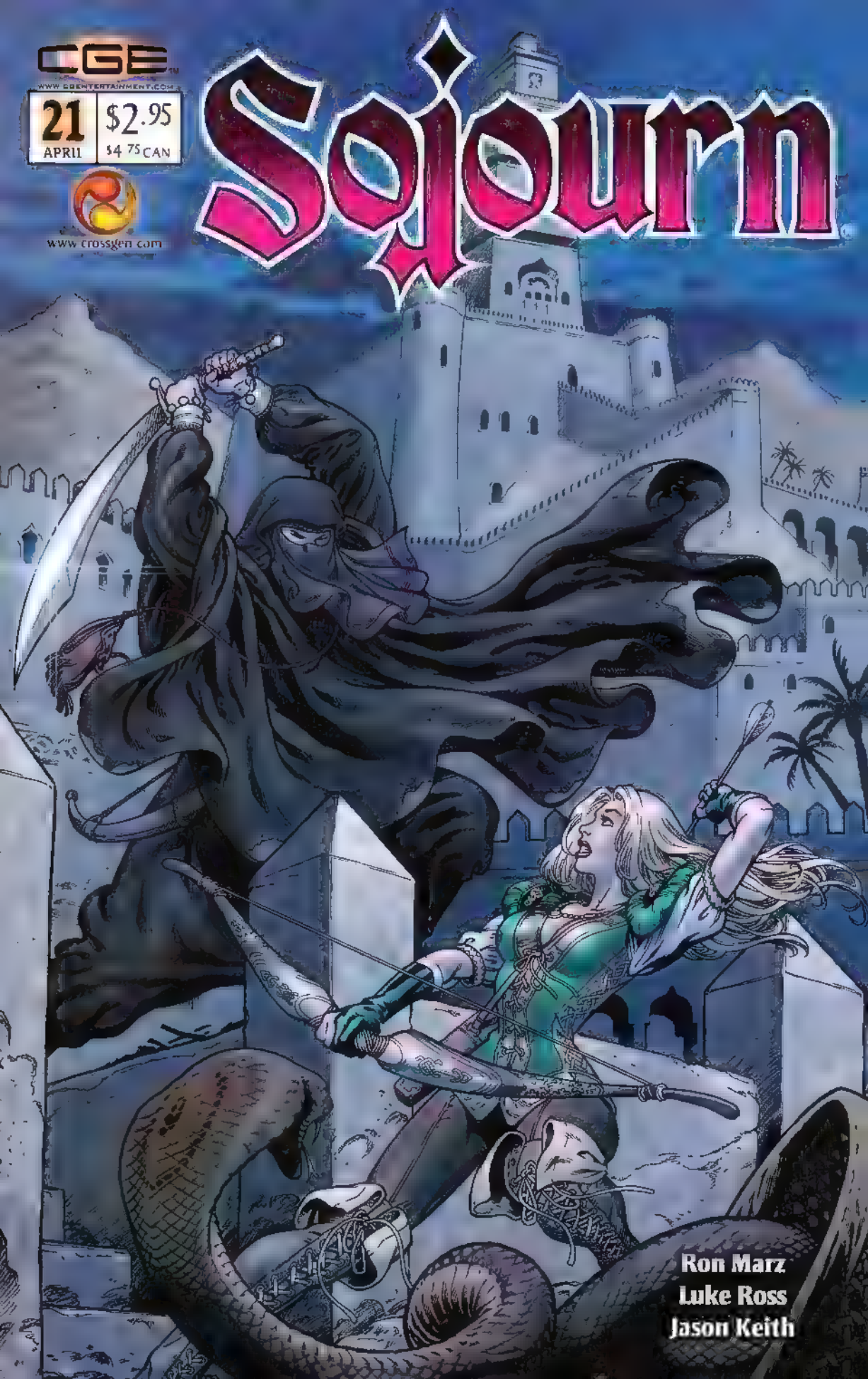
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Gareth

Bohr

Mordath

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Now Mordath has risen from his tomb. Aided by a sigil that allows him to create and command fire, Mordath has again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments at the behest of a mysterious and apparently magical woman calling herself Neven. Armed with Ayden's bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn has dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

After finding the First Fragment in Middelyn, Arwyn and Gareth journeyed to Ankbara. Arwyn was successful in obtaining the Second Fragment, but the cost was apparently Gareth's life. Laden with grief, Arwyn resumed her quest, pushing south toward the city of Aldinal in Oudubai, where she discovered Gareth at an inn, very much alive.

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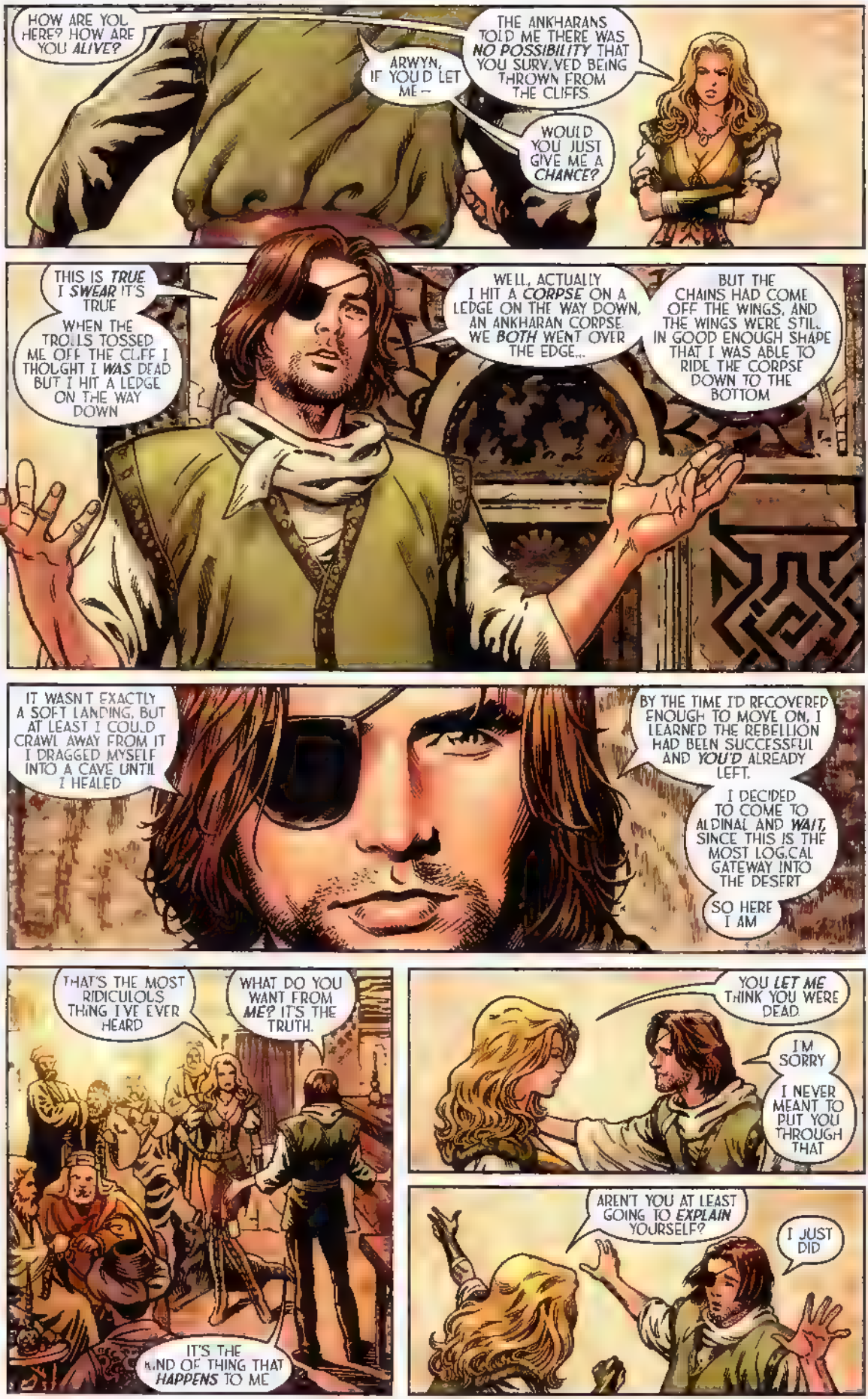
FLITCH

=HHH=

BEAUTIFUL

ARWYN, I SAID I COULD EXPLAIN
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD, GARETH
BUT AREN'T YOU GLAD I'M NOT?
I'M STILL DECIDING


HOW ARE YOU HERE? HOW ARE YOU ALIVE?
ARWYN, IF YOU'D LET ME --
THE ANKHARANS TOLD ME THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY THAT YOU SURVIVED BEING THROWN FROM THE CLIFFS
WOULD YOU JUST GIVE ME A CHANCE?
THIS IS TRUE. I SWEAR IT'S TRUE
WHEN THE TROLLS TOSSED ME OFF THE CLIFF I THOUGHT I WAS DEAD BUT I HIT A LEDGE ON THE WAY DOWN
WELL, ACTUALLY I HIT A CORPSE ON A LEDGE ON THE WAY DOWN, AN ANKHARAN CORPSE WE BOTH WENT OVER THE EDGE...
BUT THE CHAINS HAD COME OFF THE WINGS, AND THE WINGS WERE STILL IN GOOD ENOUGH SHAPE THAT I WAS ABLE TO RIDE THE CORPSE DOWN TO THE BOTTOM
IT WASN'T EXACTLY A SOFT LANDING, BUT AT LEAST I COULD CRAWL AWAY FROM IT I DRAGGED MYSELF INTO A CAVE UNTIL I HEALED
BY THE TIME I'D RECOVERED ENOUGH TO MOVE ON, I LEARNED THE REBELLION HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL AND YOU'D ALREADY LEFT.
I DECIDED TO COME TO ALDINAL AND WAIT, SINCE THIS IS THE MOST LOGICAL GATEWAY INTO THE DESERT
SO HERE I AM
THAT'S THE MOST RIDICULOUS THING I'VE EVER HEARD
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME? IT'S THE TRUTH.
IT'S THE KIND OF THING THAT HAPPENS TO ME
YOU LET ME THINK YOU WERE DEAD
I'M SORRY
I NEVER MEANT TO PUT YOU THROUGH THAT
AREN'T YOU AT LEAST GOING TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF?
I JUST DID

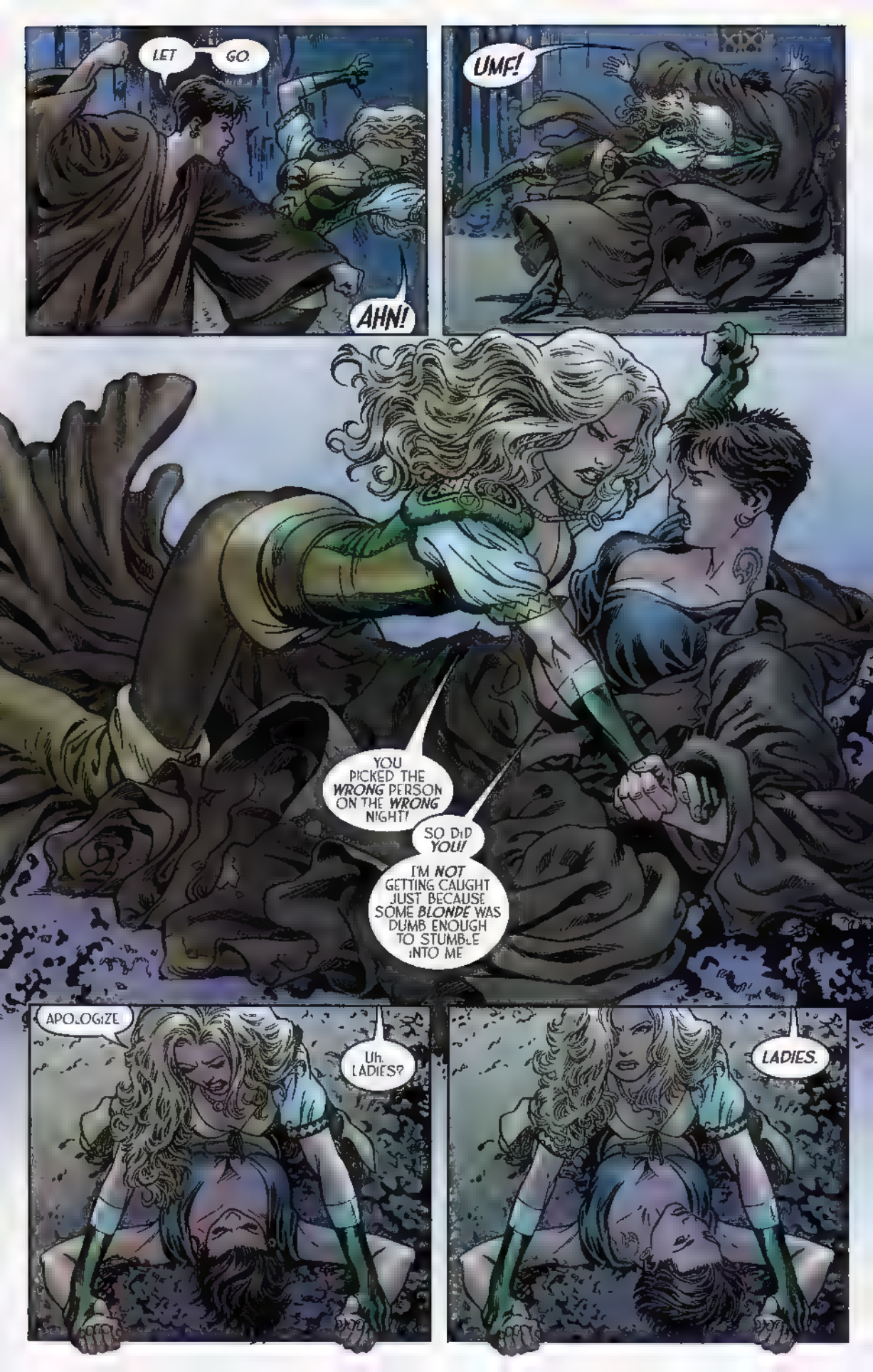
YOU KISSED ME
Oh
THAT
WELL
YOU KNOW
I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO DIE AND A.I. AND I MIGHT NEVER HAVE THE CHANCE
Oh JUST STAY AWAY FROM ME
Uh ARWYN?
ARWYN?
HRUF
WHAT?

Ahh.
WHFF!
→KOFF←
→GUH←
GET HER!
CATCH ME FIRST, BOYS!

"Oh"
THAT"
THAT'S ALL HE CAN SAY? HE DOES.
WHAT HE DID
THEN LETS ME GRIEVE FOR HIM, LETS ME BLAME MYSELF, AND ACTS LIKE IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL?
GARETH "THE BOWMAN" SOME HERO
I NEVER SHOULD'VE AGREED TO LET HIM COME ALONG IN THE FIRST PLACE
IT'S ALL CHARM AND A GRIN AND "I LOST MY EYE IN A CARD GAME," AND THEN HE SHOWS YOU WHAT HE'S REALLY LIKE
THAT'S FINE
I DON'T NEED GARETH IN FACT
HE'S THE LAST PERSON I NEED

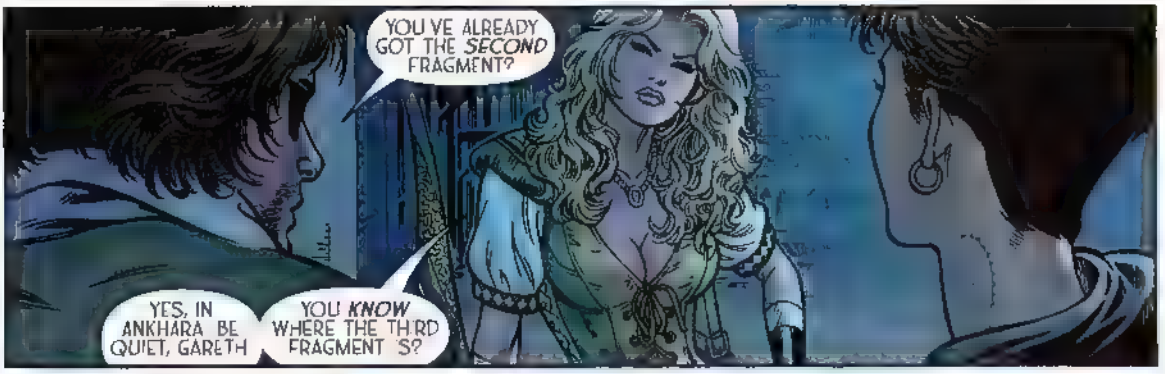
SHE MUST HAVE GONE THAT WAY!
MOVE, *MOVE*, OR THE CALIPH WILL HAVE OUR *HEADS!*
Hmf
THE CALIPH HAD BETTER HIRE *SMARTER GUARDS* IF HE WANTS TO KEEP HIS BAUBLES.

UHF?!
AHH!
WHY DON'T YOU WATCH WHERE YOU'RE *GOING*?
WHY DON'T *YOU*?
LOOK, I'VE PUT UP WITH *ENOUGH* STUPIDITY TONIGHT I DON'T NEED ANY ATTITUDE FROM YOU
HEY!
I DON'T HAVE *TIME* FOR THIS.
JUST GET OUT OF MY WAY
HFF!
YOU'RE NOT GOING *ANYWHERE* UNTIL I GET AN APOLOGY

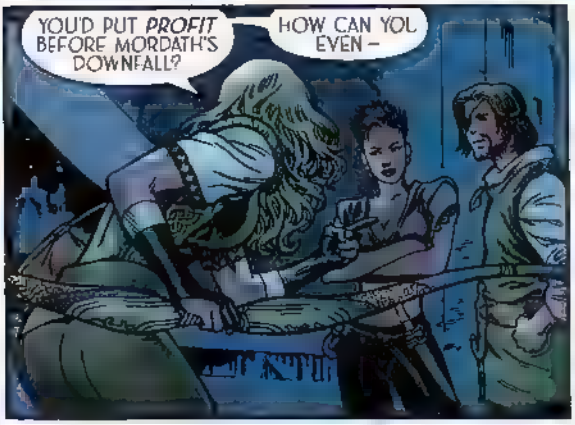

LET GO.
AHN!
UMF!
YOU PICKED THE WRONG PERSON ON THE WRONG NIGHT!
SO DID YOU!
I'M NOT GETTING CAUGHT JUST BECAUSE SOME BLONDE WAS DUMB ENOUGH TO STUMBLE INTO ME
APOLOGIZE
Uh. LADIES?
LADIES.

YOU KNOW, I REALLY THOUGHT I'D HAVE TO PAY MONEY TO SEE THIS KIND OF THING
GARETH?
CASS?
GARETH!

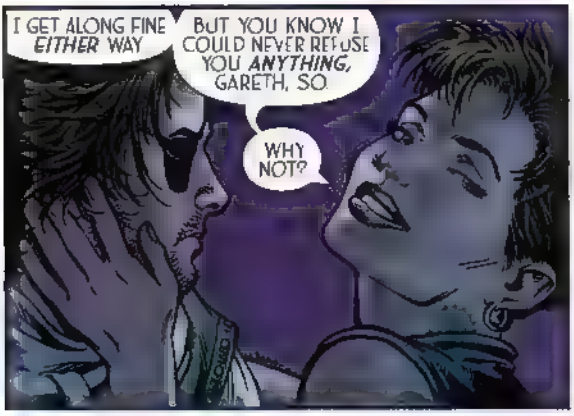
NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN
YOU TOO
JUST HAPPENED TO BE HERE *PICKING UP* SOMETHING
KNOW EACH OTHER, DO YOU?
Uh ARWYN R GHT
ARWYN, THIS S *CASSIDY* CASS ARWYN
WE KNEW EACH OTHER IN THE PAST THOUGH I HAVE TO ADMIT I DIDN'T EXPECT TO RUN INTO HER HERE
MAKES *TWO* OF US
I'D SAY I HOPE YOU'LL BE VERY HAPPY WITH EACH OTHER, BUT IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS YOU ALREADY *ARE*
SO IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'VE GOT *BETTER* THINGS TO DO
LIKE FIGURING OUT WHERE IN ALL OUDUBAI THE *THIRD FRAGMENT* IS
THE THIRD FRAGMENT? OF AYDEN S ARROW?
I KNOW WHERE IT IS


YOU'VE ALREADY GOT THE *SECOND* FRAGMENT?
YOU *KNOW* WHERE THE THIRD FRAGMENT IS?
YES, IN ANKHARA. BE QUIET, GARETH

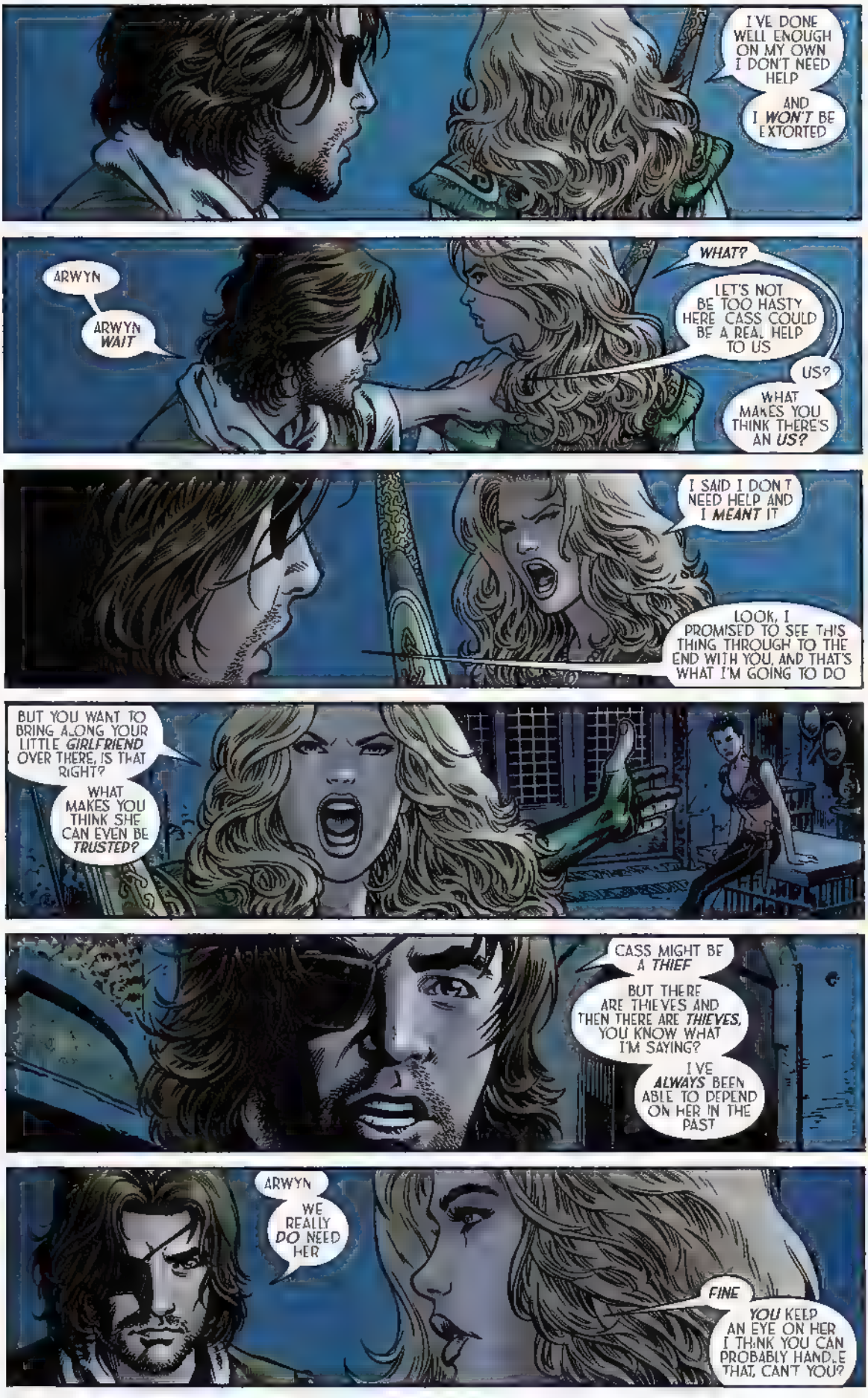
IN MY LINE OF WORK, IT PAYS TO KNOW WHERE THINGS ARE
WHERE? TELL ME
WHAT, DO I LOOK LIKE A *CHARITY* TO YOU?
I SAID, IN MY LINE OF WORK IT *PAYS* TO KNOW WHERE THINGS ARE

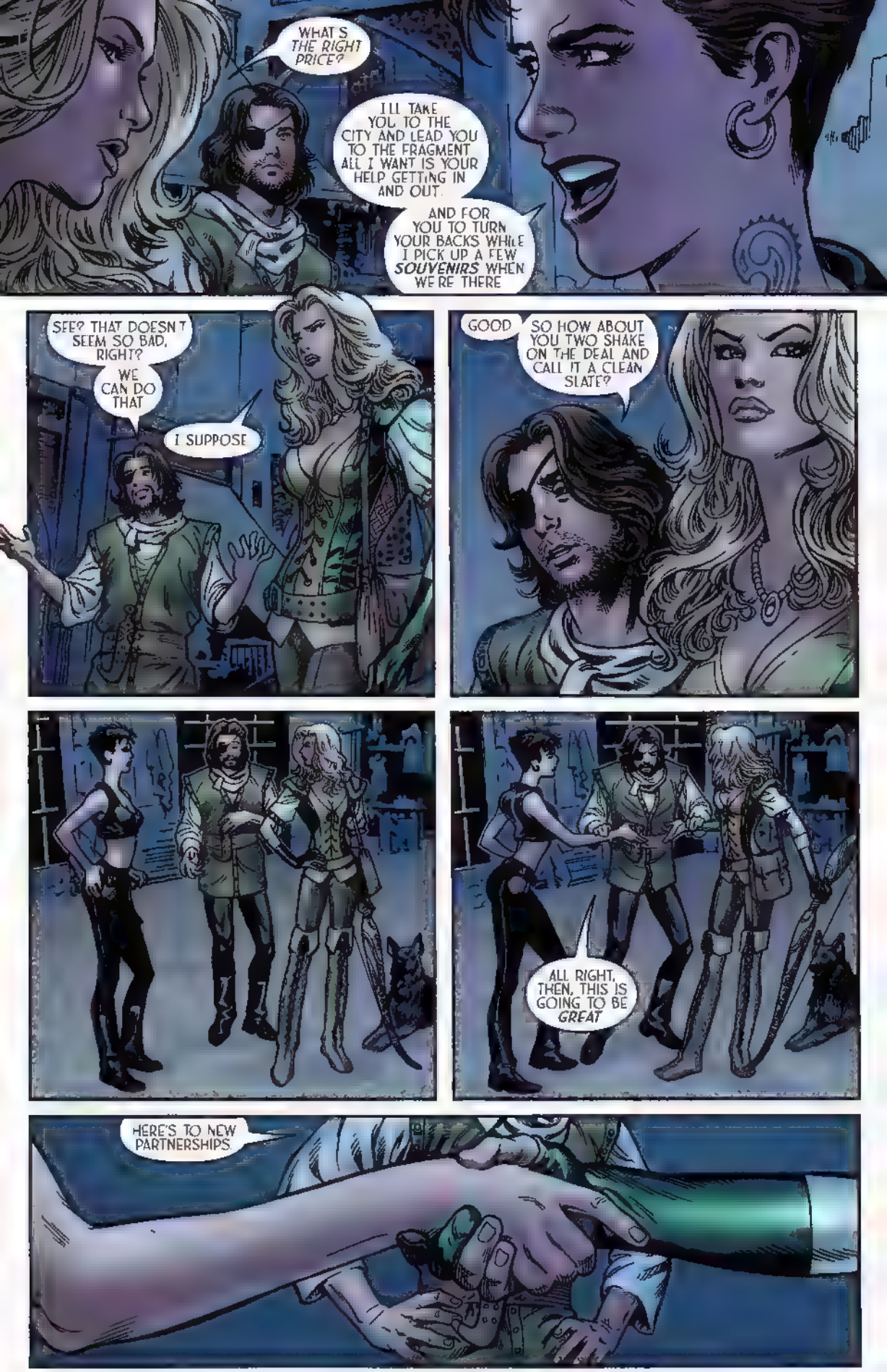

YOU'D PUT *PROFIT* BEFORE MORDATH'S DOWNFALL?
HOW CAN YOU EVEN –

EASY
CASS, IT'S A LONG STORY, BUT WE'RE GATHERING THE FRAGMENTS IN ORDER TO *DESTROY* MORDATH
DOESN'T MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE TO ME *WHO'S* IN CHARGE OF THE FIVE LANDS.


I GET ALONG FINE *EITHER* WAY
BUT YOU KNOW I COULD NEVER REFUSE YOU *ANYTHING*, GARETH, SO
WHY NOT?

THE FRAGMENTS IN THE HANDS OF THE DESERT DWELLERS, IN THEIR CITY HIDDEN DEEP IN THE *WASTES*
NOT THAT *KNOWING* IT WILL DO YOU ANY GOOD IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE THE CITY IS. I *COULD* SHOW YOU.
FOR THE RIGHT PRICE

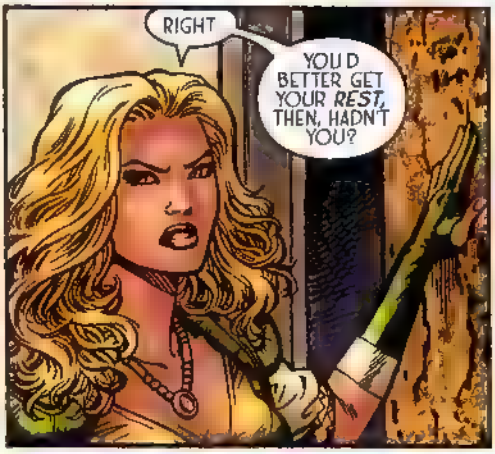

I'VE DONE WELL ENOUGH ON MY OWN I DON'T NEED HELP
AND I *WON'T* BE EXTORTED
ARWYN
ARWYN *WAIT*
WHAT?
LET'S NOT BE TOO HASTY HERE CASS COULD BE A REAL HELP TO US
US?
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THERE'S AN *US?*
I SAID I DON'T NEED HELP AND I *MEANT* IT
LOOK, I PROMISED TO SEE THIS THING THROUGH TO THE END WITH YOU, AND THAT'S WHAT I'M GOING TO DO
BUT YOU WANT TO BRING ALONG YOUR LITTLE *GIRLFRIEND* OVER THERE, IS THAT RIGHT?
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK SHE CAN EVEN BE *TRUSTED?*
CASS MIGHT BE A *THIEF*
BUT THERE ARE THIEVES AND THEN THERE ARE *THIEVES,* YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING?
I'VE *ALWAYS* BEEN ABLE TO DEPEND ON HER IN THE PAST
ARWYN
WE REALLY *DO* NEED HER
FINE
YOU KEEP AN EYE ON HER I THINK YOU CAN PROBABLY HANDLE THAT, CAN'T YOU?


WHAT'S THE RIGHT PRICE?
I'LL TAKE YOU TO THE CITY AND LEAD YOU TO THE FRAGMENT ALL I WANT IS YOUR HELP GETTING IN AND OUT.
AND FOR YOU TO TURN YOUR BACKS WHILE I PICK UP A FEW SOUVENIRS WHEN WE'RE THERE
SEE? THAT DOESN'T SEEM SO BAD, RIGHT?
WE CAN DO THAT
I SUPPOSE
GOOD
SO HOW ABOUT YOU TWO SHAKE ON THE DEAL AND CALL IT A CLEAN SLATE?
ALL RIGHT, THEN. THIS IS GOING TO BE GREAT
HERE'S TO NEW PARTNERSHIPS.

Ah, MOST KIND LADY YOUR ROOM HAS BEEN PREPARED AND YOUR HORSE IS FED AND WATERED
THAT'S GREAT
SELL HIM AND GET ME A CAMEL
Uh, AS YOU.
AS YOU WISH, KIND LADY
BIT ON THE CURT SIDE ISN'T SHE?
YOU REALLY HAVE TO GET TO KNOW HER
SEND A BOTTLE OF WINE UP TO HIS ROOM.
BETTER MAKE IT TWO BOTTLES
ABSOLUTELY!

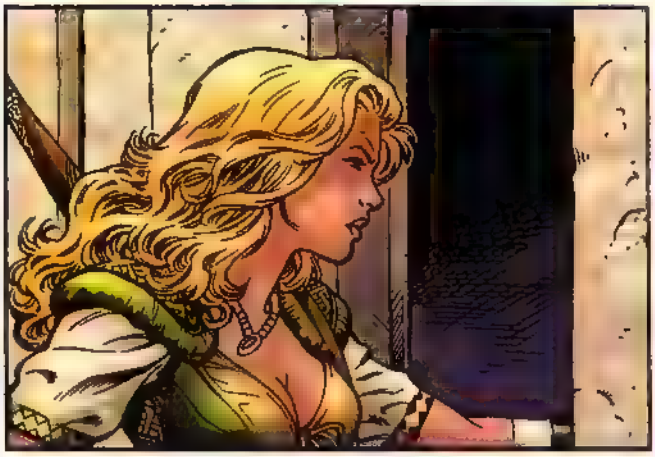
FIGURES YOU'RE STAYING HERE
WELL, WHERE ELSE ARE YOU GOING TO STAY IN ALDINA? AND THE BATHS
YEAH, BEST IN TOWN SO I HEARD

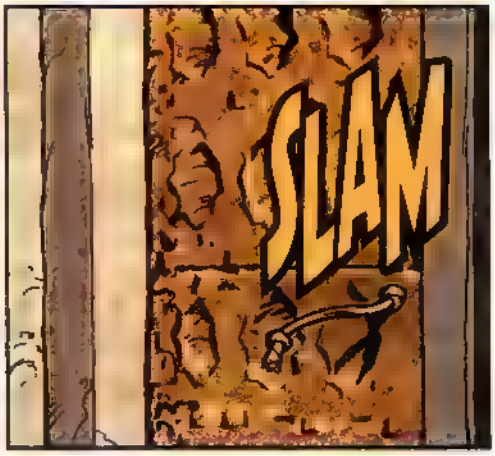
WE SHOULD, um, GET AN EARLY START
GARETH COME OHNN


RIGHT
YOU'D BETTER GET YOUR REST, THEN, HADN'T YOU?

ARWYN, I HOPE YOU'RE NOT GOING TO STAY MAD AT ME FOR..

SLAM




SLAM

HALEEK SHOULD BE RETURNING *SOON*, SHOULD HE NOT, CAPTAIN BOHR?
EEUAGH!
HALEEK WILL NOT BE RETURNING AT ALL
NOT COMING BACK?
PLEASE
PLEASE STOP
THE NEWS HE DELIVERED TO OUR LORD MORDATH WAS NOT *ACCEPTABLE*.
HALEEK HAS ASSUREDLY BEEN *SLAIN* IN ORDER TO SEND ME A MESSAGE CONCERNING MY FAILURE IN THE PURSUIT OF THE ARCHER
GYAAH!
LET'S SEE TO THIS.
HIS SCREAMS ARE BEGINNING TO *GRATE* ON ME

LEAVE OFF
YES, CAPTAIN
YOUR COMPANIONS WERE NOT ENTIRELY FORTHCOMING. THEIR FATE WAS *HARSH*.
THUS FAR, *YOU* HAVE BEEN OF VERY LITTLE HELP TO US AS WELL
BECAUSE I DON'T *KNOW* ANYTHING!
I *TOLD* YOU! I *KEEP* TELLING YOU!
I DON'T KNOW *ANYTHING* ABOUT HER! SHE WAS JUST A WOMAN WE MET ON THE ROAD!
WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO *PROTECT* HER?
I'M NOT! THAT CRAZY WITCH ALMOST KILLED ME!
SHE WAS HEADED SOUTH INTO OUDUBAI! THAT'S ALL I *KNOW!*
THAT'S *ALL!*
THEN I HAVE NO FURTHER *NEED* OF YOU
WAIT!
WAIT, I *REMEMBER!* SHE SAID ONE OTHER THING...
GO ON.
SHE SAID SHE WAS *LOOKING* FOR SOMETHING SHE DIDN'T SAY WHAT
.BUT SHE SAID SHE WANTED TO GO TO OUDUBAI AND *FIND WHAT SHE WAS LOOKING FOR*

SHE'S BEEN IN MIDDELYN, IN ANKHARA, AND NOW SHE CONTINUES TO OUDUBAI, SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING
PERHAPS SHE'S *NOT* SIMPLY RUNNING FROM US, PERHAPS SHE'S.
THE FRAGMENTS
CAPTAIN?
SHE IS GATHERING THE *FRAGMENTS* OF AYDEN'S LEGENDARY ARROW.
SHE LIKELY HAS *TWO* OF THEM ALREADY.
THAT *MUST* BE IT
WE NO LONGER NEED *CHASE* THIS WOMAN
WE CAN BEAT HER TO HER GOAL AND BE *WAITING* FOR HER
WHAT OF THIS ONE, CAPTAIN? *KILL HIM?*
NO!
PLEASE, DON'T
PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE
DO AS YOU WISH

HOLD.
A HUMAN MIGHT BE *USEFUL* TO US.
WHAT IS YOUR *NAME*, HUMAN?
FRANCIS
IF I SPARE YOU, FRANCIS...
...IF...
...YOU WILL BE LOYAL *ONLY* TO ME, AND DO MY BIDDING WITHOUT QUESTION
YES!
YES, *ANYTHING!* JUST DON'T *KILL* ME!
THEN UNDERSTAND THIS. THE FIRST TIME I HAVE REASON *TO DOUBT* YOUR LOYALTY
...WILL BE THE *LAST* TIME.
BREAK CAMP.
THE SOONER WE'RE ON THE ROAD...
...THE SOONER THE WOMAN IS *OURS*.

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MORDATH
the dread lord before his resurrection. courtesy of
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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Cassidy

Bohr

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Ayden retreated to the solitude from which he'd come, but broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb. Aided by a sigil that allows him to create and command fire, Mordath has again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments at the behest of a mysterious and apparently magical woman calling herself Neven. Armed with Ayden's bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn has dedicated herself

After finding the First Fragment in Middelyn, Arwyn and Gareth journeyed to Ankhara, where she obtained the Second Fragment. Now, having reached Oudubai, Arwyn and Gareth have been joined by Cassidy, a thief of Gareth's acquaintance, who claims to know the location of the Third Fragment.

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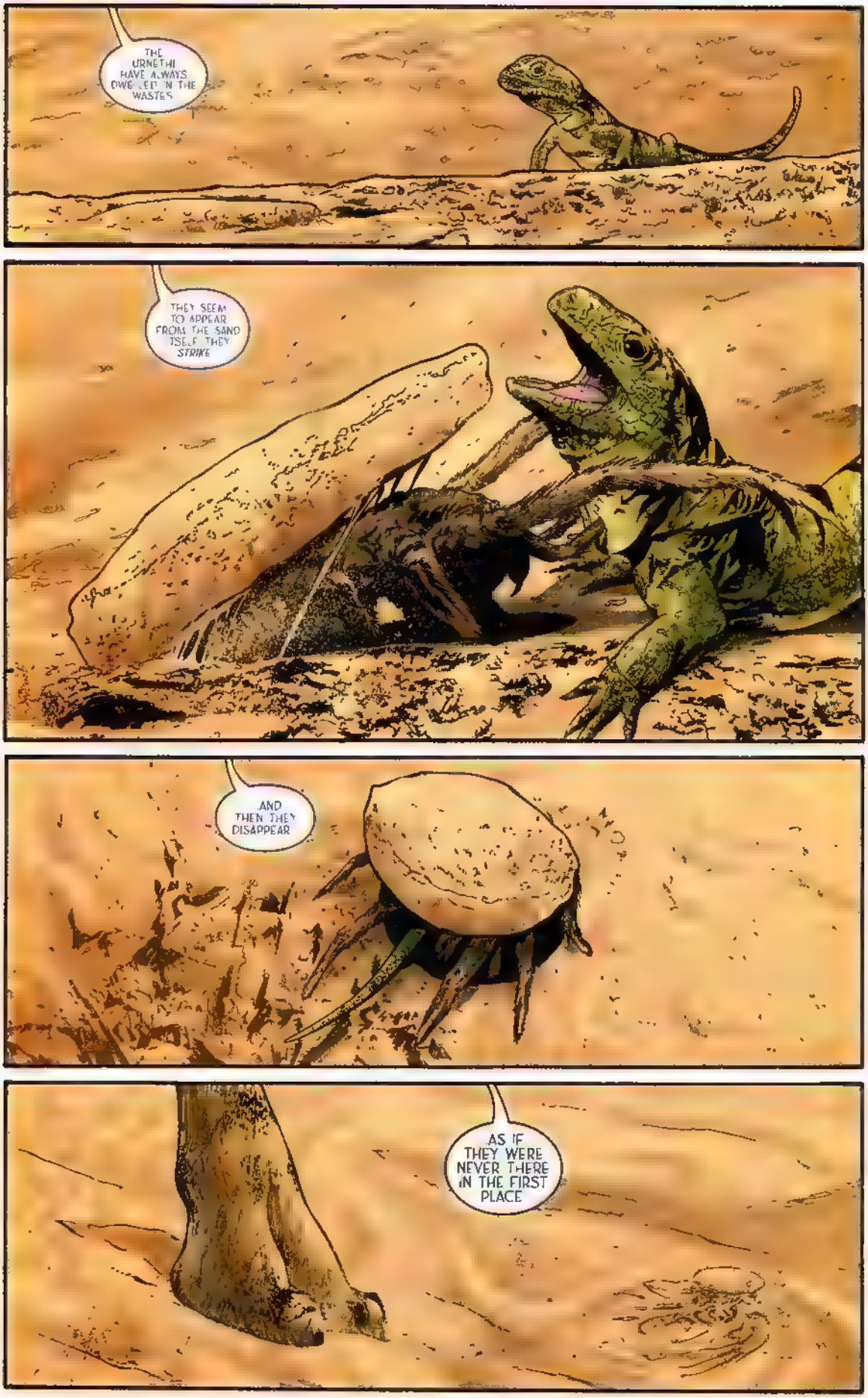
ENOUGH OF THIS!
LET'S KILL THE HUMAN AND BE DONE WITH IT!
PLEASE!
PLEASE, JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME!

STAND DOWN, HARREN.
CAPTAIN BOHR?
STAND DOWN
THANK YOU. THANK YOU, THANK YOU
THIS ONE WHO CALLS HIMSELF FRANCIS HAS PROVEN LOYAL ENOUGH THUS FAR
HE ARRANGED THIS MEETING THROUGH HIS CONTACTS IN ALDINAL. HE *DIRECTED* US HERE.
THIS TIME WE WILL BE AT THE ARCHER'S GOAL BEFORE SHE WILL
WE WILL BE *DEAD* BEFORE SHE WILL!
THE FOOL HAS LED US INTO THE WASTES AND THERE IS NOTHING BUT HEAT AND SAND AND *DEATH* HERE!
LOOK AROUND US, MY CAPTAIN!
THE *HORSES* PERISH, THE MEN GROW EVER WEAKER FROM THEIR *THIRST!*
THIS PLACE IS FIT FOR NOTHING SAVE *INSECTS* AND THE *CARRION EATERS!*

YOU HAVE TO BE *PATIENT!*
I DID EVERYTHING YOU ASKED, I *SWEAR!* YOU WANTED A MEETING, I ARRANGED A MEETING
THEN WHERE *ARE* THOSE WHO WILL MEET US?
Uh
LATE?
AN HOUR MORE
THEN MY PATIENCE WILL BE *EXHAUSTED.*
IT WAS NO IDLE THREAT WHEN I TOLD YOU THE *FIRST TIME* I HAD REASON TO DOUBT YOU WOULD BE THE *LAST*
I *STILL* SAY WE KILL HIM NOW
ONE HOUR BUT I *DO* GROW ANXIOUS.
NOTHING BUT SAND, AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE
SIR!

HERE.
.. SOMETHING *DISTURBS* THE SAND
SEE?
EVEN THE *FLESH PICKER* SENSES IT
WHAT *IS* IT, CAPTAIN?
IT'S THEM!
I *TOLD* YOU THEY'D COME!
ARM YOURSELVES.
AND BE READY FOR *WHATEVER'S* COMING.


THE URNETHI HAVE ALWAYS DWELLED IN THE WASTES
THEY SEEM TO APPEAR FROM THE SAND ITSELF THEY STRIKE
AND THEN THEY DISAPPEAR
AS IF THEY WERE NEVER THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE

LIKE GHOSTS

HOW?

FOR ONE THING, THEY KEEP THEIR *SECRETS* TO THEMSELVES.

MOST PEOPLE THINK THEY'RE *NOMADS*, JUST MOVING FROM PLACE TO PLACE IN THE DESERT THEY'RE *TRIBAL*, BUT THEY'RE NOT NOMADS

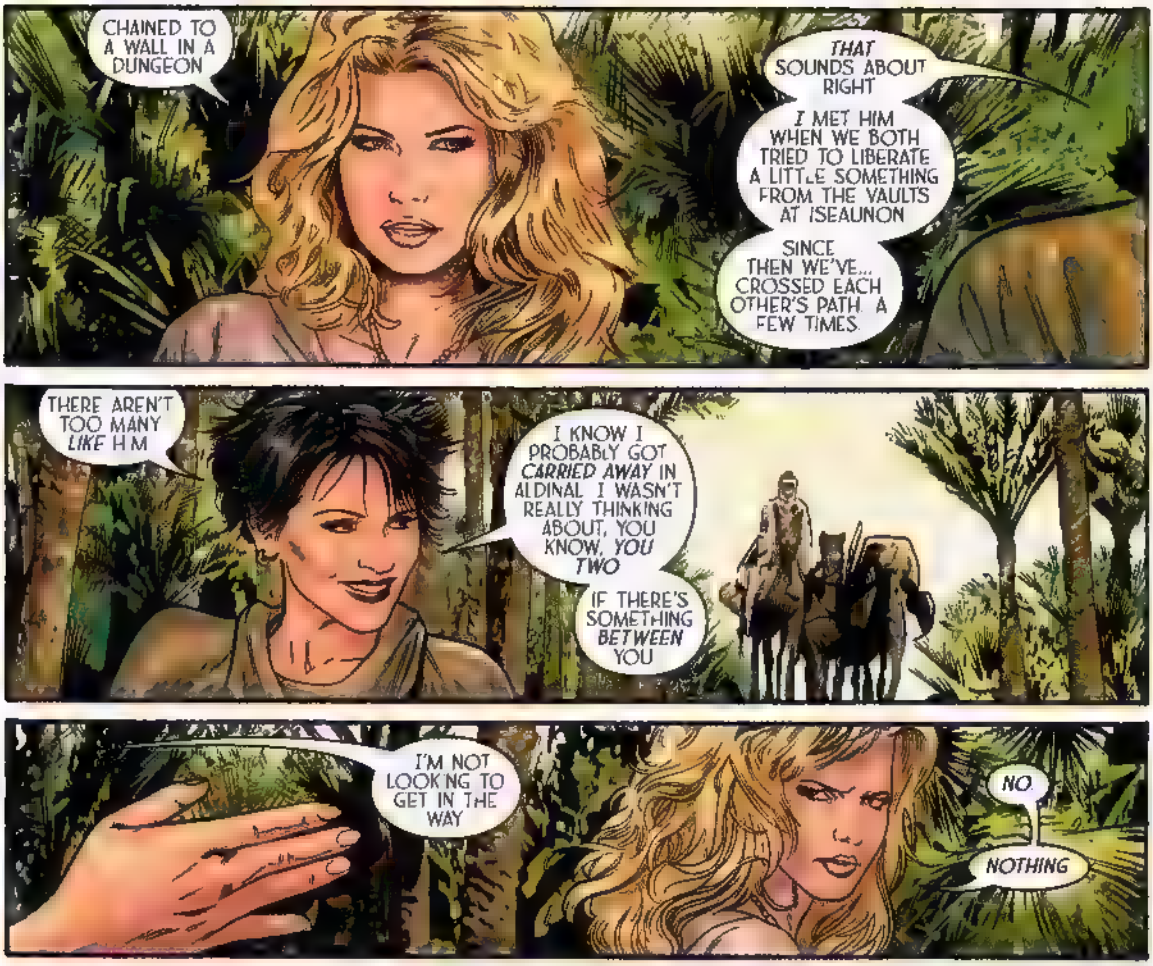
THEY HAVE A CITY, *GEASIS*, THOUGH VERY FEW OUTSIDERS HAVE EVER SEEN IT OR KNOW WHERE IT IS.

AND YOU KNOW ALL THIS *HOW*, CASSIDY?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE A *THIEF*, NOT A TOUR GUIDE
I KNOW ALL THIS BECAUSE I WAS *THERE*.
THE URNETHI DON'T LIKE OUTSIDERS, BUT THEY *TOLERATE* THEM WHEN IT SERVES THEIR PURPOSES
THERE ARE CERTAIN ITEMS THEY NEED, THINGS THEY CAN'T GET THEMSELVES IF YOU *HAVE* THEM, THE URNETHI ARE WILLING TO DO BUSINESS WITH YOU.
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, ARWYN
WE COULDN'T BE IN BETTER HANDS THAN CASSIDY'S
INTERESTING WAY TO *PUT IT*, GARETH, CONSIDERING THE PAST..
RELATIONSHIP, OR WHATEVER YOU'D CALL IT...
THAT YOU TWO HAVE HAD
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT, FOR *ALL* OUR SAKES
WE'RE AWFULLY DEEP INTO THE WASTES, SO WE'D *BETTER* KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING. THIS IS A PRETTY BRUTAL ENVIRONMENT..
ESPECIALLY FOR KREEG
WE COULD *ALL* USE A BREAK
THERE'S AN OASIS JUST OVER THE NEXT RISE
WE CAN REFILL OUR WATER SUPPLY, AND IT'S GETTING *LATE ENOUGH* WE MIGHT AS WE..L BED DOWN FOR THE NIGHT

LAST ONE THERE SLEEPS WITH THE CAMELS!
STILL BEING A LITTLE ROUGH ON CASS, DON'T YOU THINK, ARWYN?
EVER SINCE ALDINAL YOU'VE BEEN RIDING HER HARDER THAN YOUR CAMEL
I TRUST MY CAMEL MORE THAN I TRUST HER
HOW DO I KNOW SHE'S NOT LEADING US OUT HERE SO SHE CAN GET RID OF US AND TAKE THE TREASURE I'M CARRYING?
BECAUSE I TOLD YOU SHE'S NOT SHE'S TAKING US WHERE WE NEED TO GO BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO
AND I'M SURE YOUR OPINION HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU TWO NOT BEING ABLE TO KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF EACH OTHER
IT DOES HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH IT IT'S PURELY--
ARWYN!
WOMEN

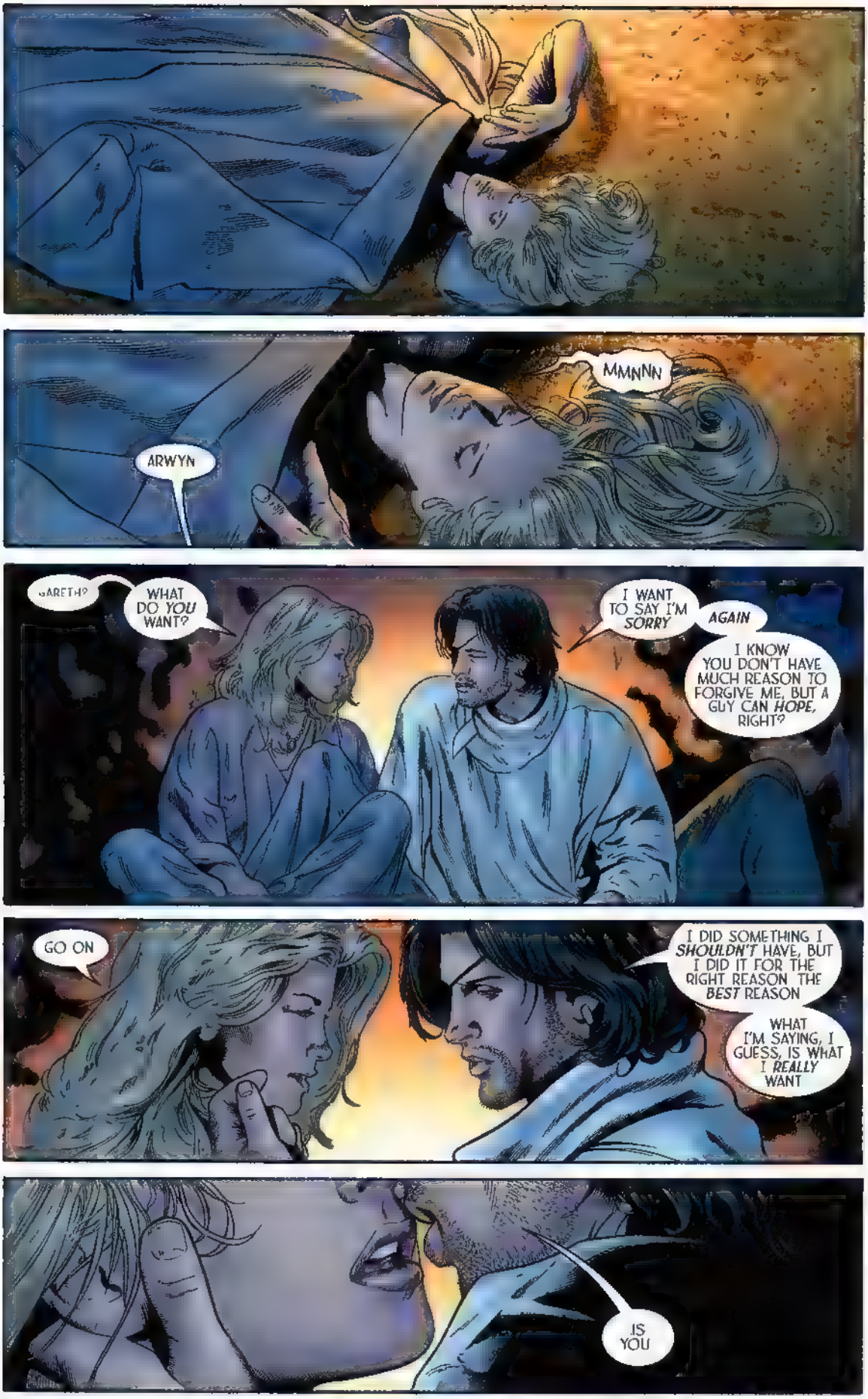
SLOW DOWN
SLOW DOWN, DAMN YOU!
STOP, YOU MISERABLE BEAST!
STOP!
UFF!
HRRURR
Oh, SHUT UP
I MIGHT NOT SEEM LIKE IT

BUT I THINK HE'S ACTUALLY WARMING UP TO YOU
IF WE'D BROUGHT *HORSES* INTO THE WASTES THEY WOULD HAVE *DROPPED* TWO DAYS AGO
I KNOW THEY MIGHT BE FOUL-TEMPERED, BUT THE CAMELS ARE THE ONLY CREATURES WHO CAN SURVIVE THIS CLIMATE.
BESIDES THE URNETHI, OF COURSE
HERE, HAVE A DRINK
I CAN GET MY OWN
I *REALIZE* YOU DON'T LIKE ME MUCH THAT'S FINE, I DON'T THINK YOU'RE EXACTLY MY TYPE EITHER
BUT LET ME GIVE YOU A BIT OF ADVICE IF SOMEONE *ANYONE* OFFERS YOU WATER IN THE DESERT
YOU *TAKE* IT
THANK YOU
IF YOU DON'T MIND MY ASKING, HOW *DID* YOU AND GARETH MEET?


CHAINED TO A WALL IN A DUNGEON
THAT SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT
I MET HIM WHEN WE BOTH TRIED TO LIBERATE A LITTLE SOMETHING FROM THE VAULTS AT ISEAUNON
SINCE THEN WE'VE... CROSSED EACH OTHER'S PATH A FEW TIMES
THERE AREN'T TOO MANY LIKE HIM
I KNOW I PROBABLY GOT CARRIED AWAY IN ALDINAL I WASN'T REALLY THINKING ABOUT, YOU KNOW, YOU TWO
IF THERE'S SOMETHING BETWEEN YOU
I'M NOT LOOKING TO GET IN THE WAY
NO.
NOTHING
YOU CAN HAVE HIM
THERE ISN'T ANYTHING BETWEEN US
DESPITE WHATEVER HE MIGHT THINK
ALL RIGHT
THIS QUEST YOU'VE TALKED ABOUT

THERE'S NOT MUCH TO TALK ABOUT
MORDATH HAD MY FAMILY KILLED. I'M GOING TO RETURN THE FAVOR
I TRIED DOING IT MYSELF, BUT THAT'S HOW I WOUND UP IN THE DUNGEON NEXT TO GARETH
SO THE NEXT BEST THING SEEMS TO BE GATHERING THE FRAGMENTS OF AYDEN'S ARROW
I'VE ALREADY GOT TWO OF THEM
COULD I SEE THEM?
ALL RIGHT
I DON'T SUPPOSE THERE'S MUCH HARM
YOU REALLY DO HAVE THEM
THEY MUST BE PRICELESS

I'M NOT CONCERNED WITH HOW MUCH THEY'RE *WORTH*
YOU SHOULDN'T BE EITHER
YOU DON'T *TRUST* ME, DO YOU?
I DON'T TRUST *ANYONE*
SO, YOU TWO GETTING ON A LITTLE FRIENDLIER TERMS?
NOT SO YOU'D NOTICE
ARWYN S LOST A *LOT* GIVE HER A LITTLE TIME, SHE'LL COME AROUND
I THINK
I WON'T HOLD MY BREATH
COME ON
" HELP ME SET UP CAMP FOR THE NIGHT "

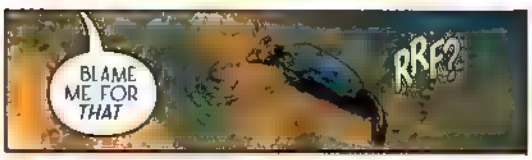

MMNNN
ARWYN
GARETH?
WHAT DO *YOU* WANT?
I WANT TO SAY I'M *SORRY*
AGAIN
I KNOW YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH REASON TO FORGIVE ME, BUT A GUY CAN *HOPE*, RIGHT?
GO ON
I DID SOMETHING I *SHOULDN'T* HAVE, BUT I DID IT FOR THE RIGHT REASON THE *BEST* REASON
WHAT I'M SAYING, I GUESS, IS WHAT I *REALLY* WANT
IS YOU

MMNNN
ARWYN
GARETH?
WHAT
WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHAT DO YOU *WANT?*
TO TALK
SHOULDN'T YOU BE PAYING ATTENTION TO YOUR *THIEF?* SHE'S PROBABLY GETTING A LITTLE *CHILLY*
I THINK IT'S A LOT MORE IMPORTANT WE CLEAR THE AIR BETWEEN US
THERE'S BEEN A *DISTANCE* BETWEEN US SINCE ALDINAL AND I DON'T LIKE IT
I THOUGHT WE DISCUSSED IT BACK *IN* ALDINAL
DO YOU MEAN *BEFORE* OR *AFTER* YOU HIT ME?
LOOK, ARWYN, I'VE SAID IT BEFORE AND I'LL *KEEP ON* SAYING IT
IF THIS IS ABOUT ME KISSING YOU, I'M *SORRY*

YOU'RE SORRY YOU KISSED ME IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?
NO
NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M SAYING AT ALL
YOU KNOW, SOME WOMEN HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN GLAD WHEN I KISSED THEM
DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF
ARWYN, I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'RE SO MAD

BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T HAVE THE RIGHT
IT HASN'T EVEN BEEN SIX MONTHS SINCE I BURIED THE MAN I LOVED. HOW DARE YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT
I DIDN'T DO IT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE I DID IT

I DID IT BECAUSE I CARE ABOUT YOU
IF YOU WANT TO BLAME ME FOR SOMETHING


BLAME ME FOR THAT
RRF?

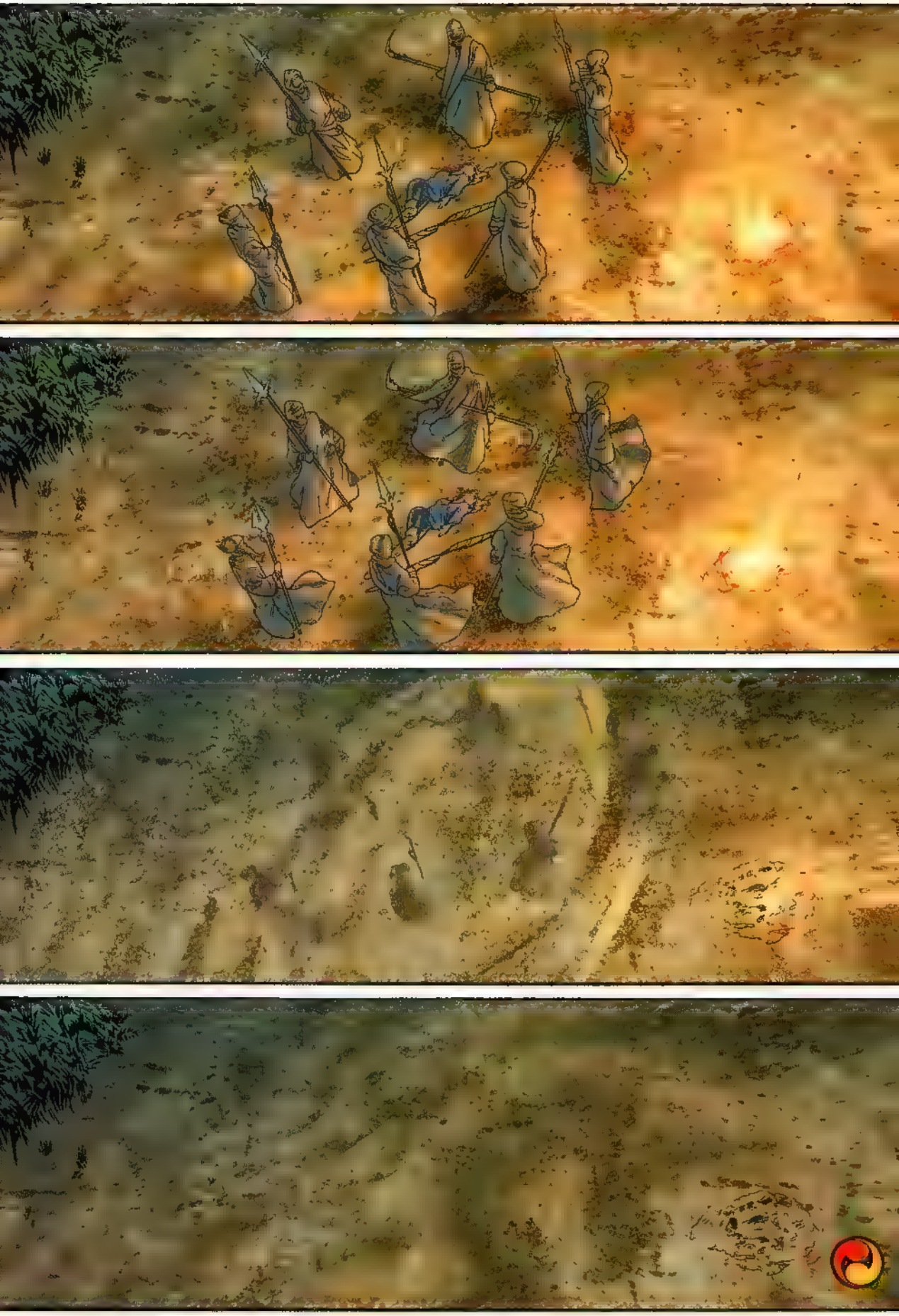
YYARK

WHNN
WHNN

KREEG!
WHERE DID HE GO?!
HOW COULD HE JUST DISAPPEAR LIKE THAT?!
GET AWAY FROM IT!
CASS, WHAT'S–
IT'S THEM! GET BACK! GET
AAHF!
HANG ON, CASS!
AAAAHN
HMMF!

GARETH!
ARWYN, DON'T COME ANY CLOSER!
ANCHOR YOURSELF WITH SOMETHING!
AHH?!
>HHH<
>HHH<
>HHH<
WHAT'S HAPPENING?!

YOU'RE THE URNETHI?
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY DID YOU TAKE THE OTHERS?
BACK AWAY
BACK AWAY OR I'LL HAVE TO—
NGH
HRR
THOK
HNGH



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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Cassidy

Bohr

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Ayden retreated to the solitude from which he'd come, but broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb and again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn took up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments. Armed with Ayden's bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

After finding the First Fragment in Middelyn, Arwyn and Gareth journeyed to Ankhara, where she obtained the Second Fragment. They were joined in Oudubai by the thief Cassidy, who led them into the desert in pursuit of the Third Fragment. However, the Urnethi, the mysterious dwellers of the Wastes, seemingly have captured our heroes.

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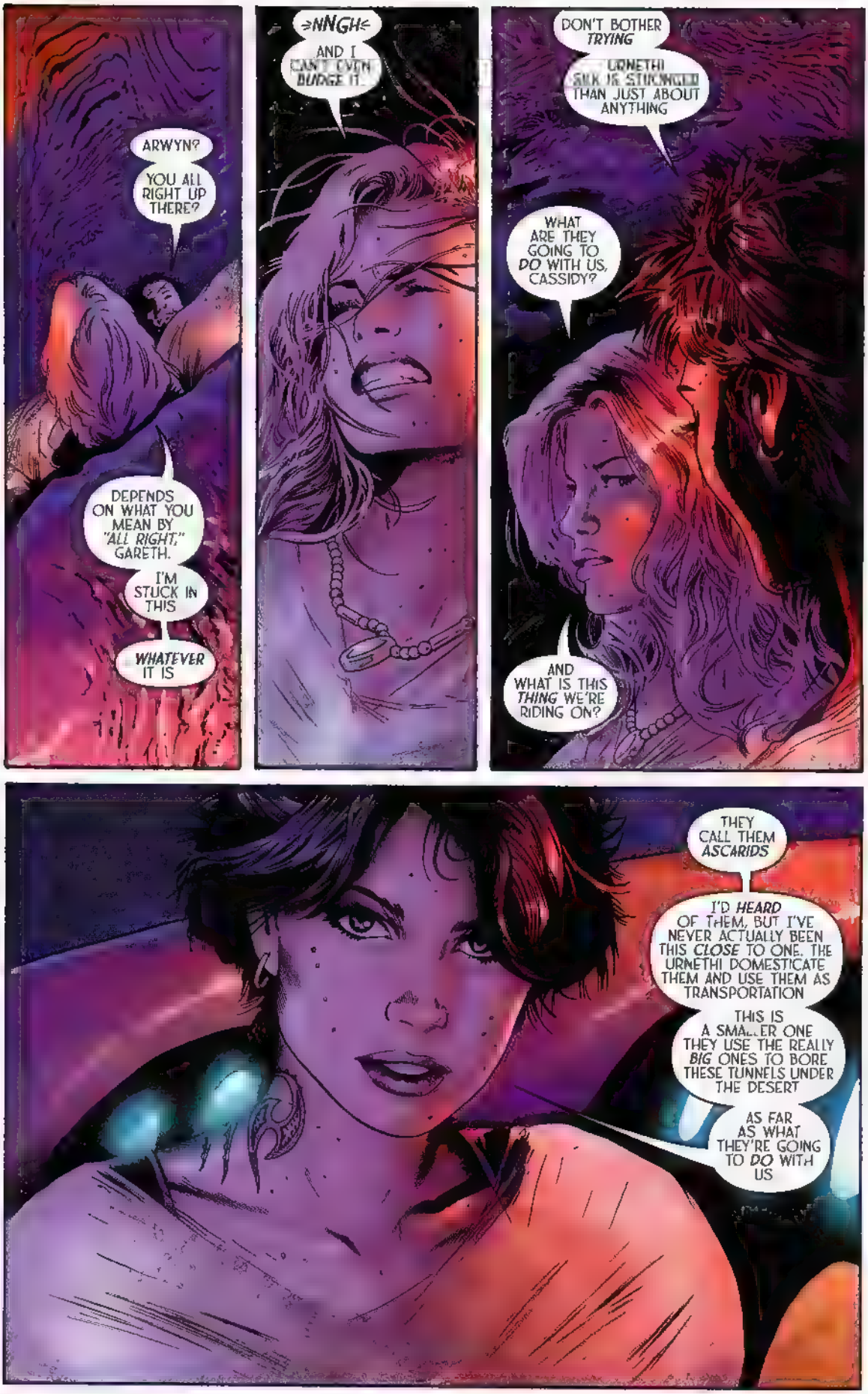
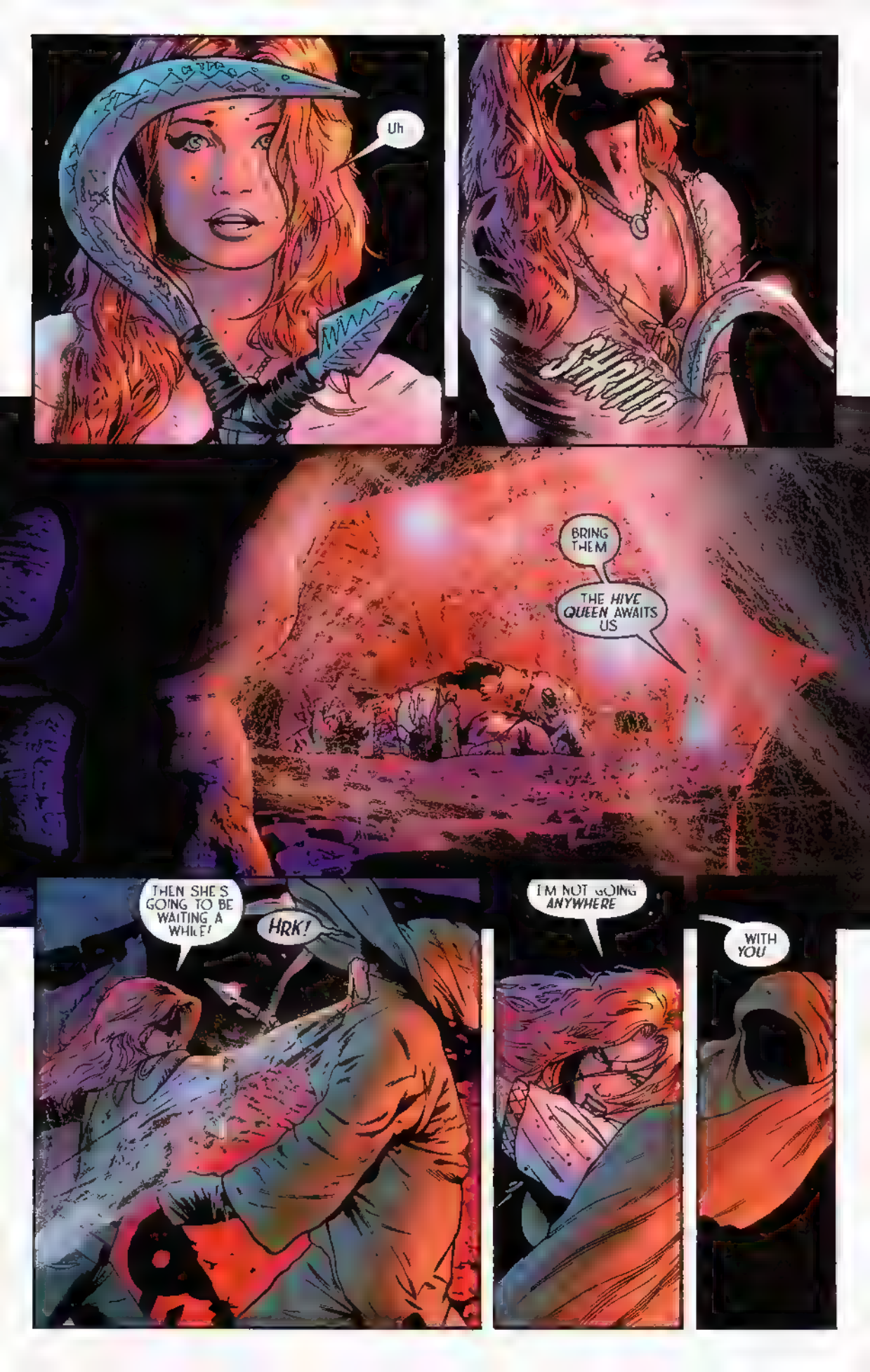
MMM
COME ON, STOP THAT
WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS NOW
KREEG!
STOP IT, BOY

I THINK WE MIGHT BE IN A LITTLE TROUBLE HERE


ARWYN?
YOU ALL RIGHT UP THERE?
DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU MEAN BY "ALL RIGHT," GARETH.
I'M STUCK IN THIS
WHATEVER IT IS
=NNGH=
AND I CAN'T EVEN BUDGE IT.
DON'T BOTHER TRYING
URNETHI SILK IS STRONGER THAN JUST ABOUT ANYTHING
WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO WITH US, CASSIDY?
AND WHAT IS THIS THING WE'RE RIDING ON?
THEY CALL THEM ASCARIDS
I'D HEARD OF THEM, BUT I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY BEEN THIS CLOSE TO ONE. THE URNETHI DOMESTICATE THEM AND USE THEM AS TRANSPORTATION
THIS IS A SMALLER ONE THEY USE THE REALLY BIG ONES TO BORE THESE TUNNELS UNDER THE DESERT
AS FAR AS WHAT THEY'RE GOING TO DO WITH US

I WISH I COULD TELL YOU.
YOU'RE SAYING YOU DON'T *KNOW*
OR YOU WON'T *TELL?*
YOU WOULDN'T KNOW ANYTHING *MORE* ABOUT THIS, WOULD YOU, CASSIDY?
WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU GETTING AT? YOU THINK I *SET THIS UP?*
THE THOUGHT CROSSED MY MIND
Oh, I'M *SURE* IT DID.
LOOK, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR *PROBLEM* WITH ME IS, BUT—
QUIET
WE NEAR GEASIS
AYDEN'S EYES

IT'S HUGE


Uh
SHRUD
BRING THEM
THE HIVE QUEEN AWAITS US
THEN SHE'S GOING TO BE WAITING A WHILE!
HRK!
I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE
WITH YOU

WHAT
WHAT ARE
WHUNT
UGF!
THE TRUTH IS, THEY THINK *YOU'RE* PRETTY HORRIBLE TO LOOK AT AS WELL.
THANKS
DON'T MENTION IT
STILL THINK I'M IN BED WITH THE URNETHI ..SO TO SPEAK?
YOU COULD DO A LOT TO CONVINCE ME *OTHERWISE* IF YOU CAN GET OUR WEAPONS BACK.

ARWYN, NEXT TIME YOU GET A GRAND ESCAPE IDEA...
...HOW ABOUT A LITTLE *WARNING*?
COMPLAIN, COMPLAIN, COMPLAIN
UFF!
IS THIS THE WAY YOU TWO *ALWAYS* ACT WITH EACH OTHER, OR IS IT JUST FOR *MY* BENEFIT?
HE'S LUCKY I'M EVEN *TALKING* TO HIM
YOU JUST WORRY ABOUT THE WEAPONS
FINE
GARETH!

THANKS
WORKS A LOT BETTER THAN *HARSH LANGUAGE*
THIS WAY!
IF WE RETREAT INTO THE *TUNNELS* THEY'LL RUN US DOWN!
OUR BEST CHANCE IS TO HEAD INTO THE CITY SO WE CAN LOSE THE PURSUIT *THEN* FIND A PASSAGE BACK TO THE SURFACE
THIS HAD BETTER *WORK*
YOU COULDN'T HAVE GRABBED ME SOME *ARROWS* AS WELL?
THE URNETHI DIDN'T *BRING* THEM, ONLY THE BOW
AND YOU'RE *WELCOME*
I'LL TAKE THE BAG, SEEING AS THE *FRAGMENTS* ARE IN THERE
SURE
SUIT YOURSELF

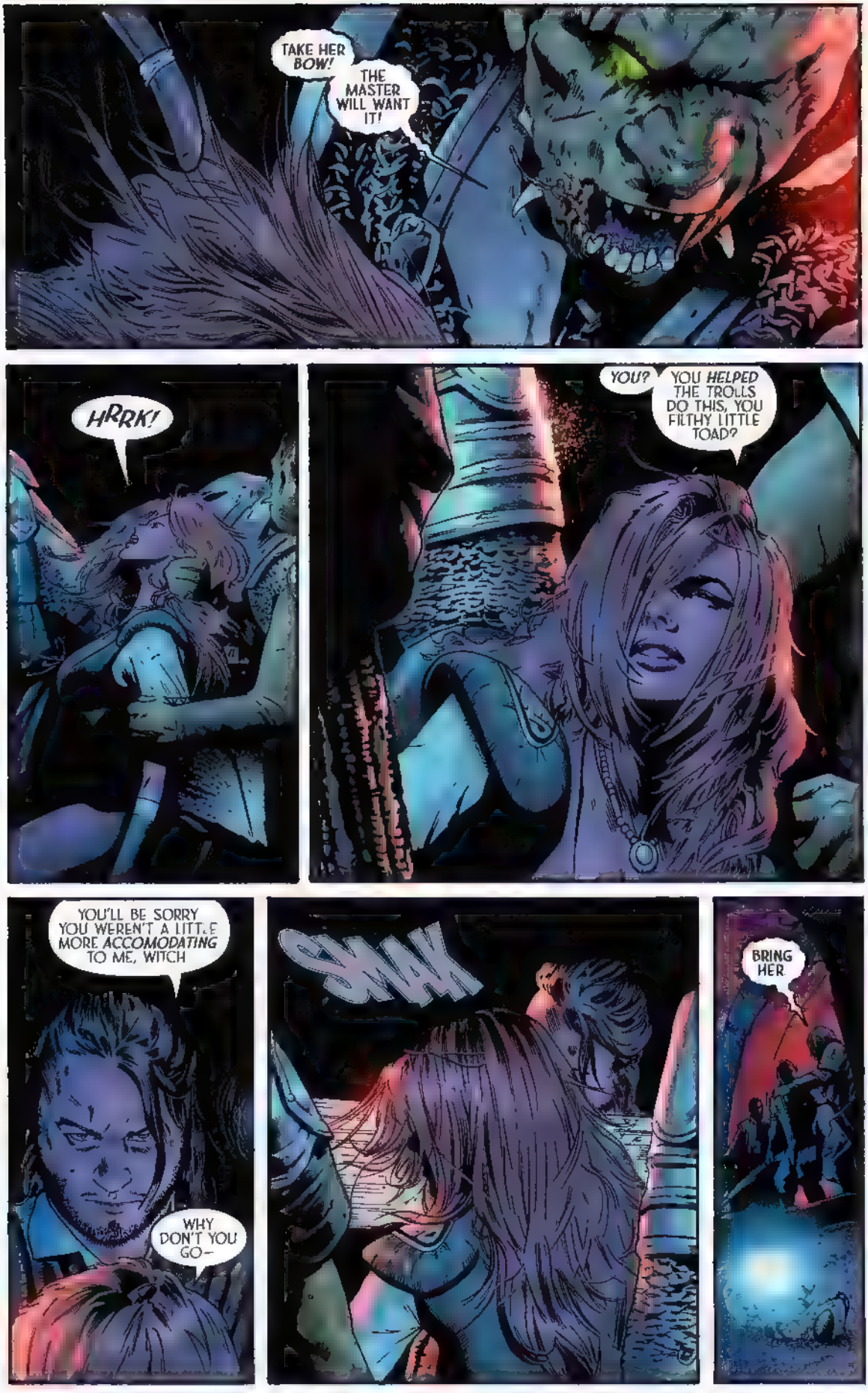
PLAY NICE, GIRLS.
AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO WATCH YOU TWO ROLL AROUND ON THE GROUND AGAIN...
...LET'S CONCENTRATE ON FINDING SOMEPLACE A LITTLE LESS *CROWDED*.
THIS WAY LOOKS DESERTED.
PRETTY DARK.
WHICH IS PROBABLY A *GOOD* SIGN.
ON THE *OTHER* HAND...

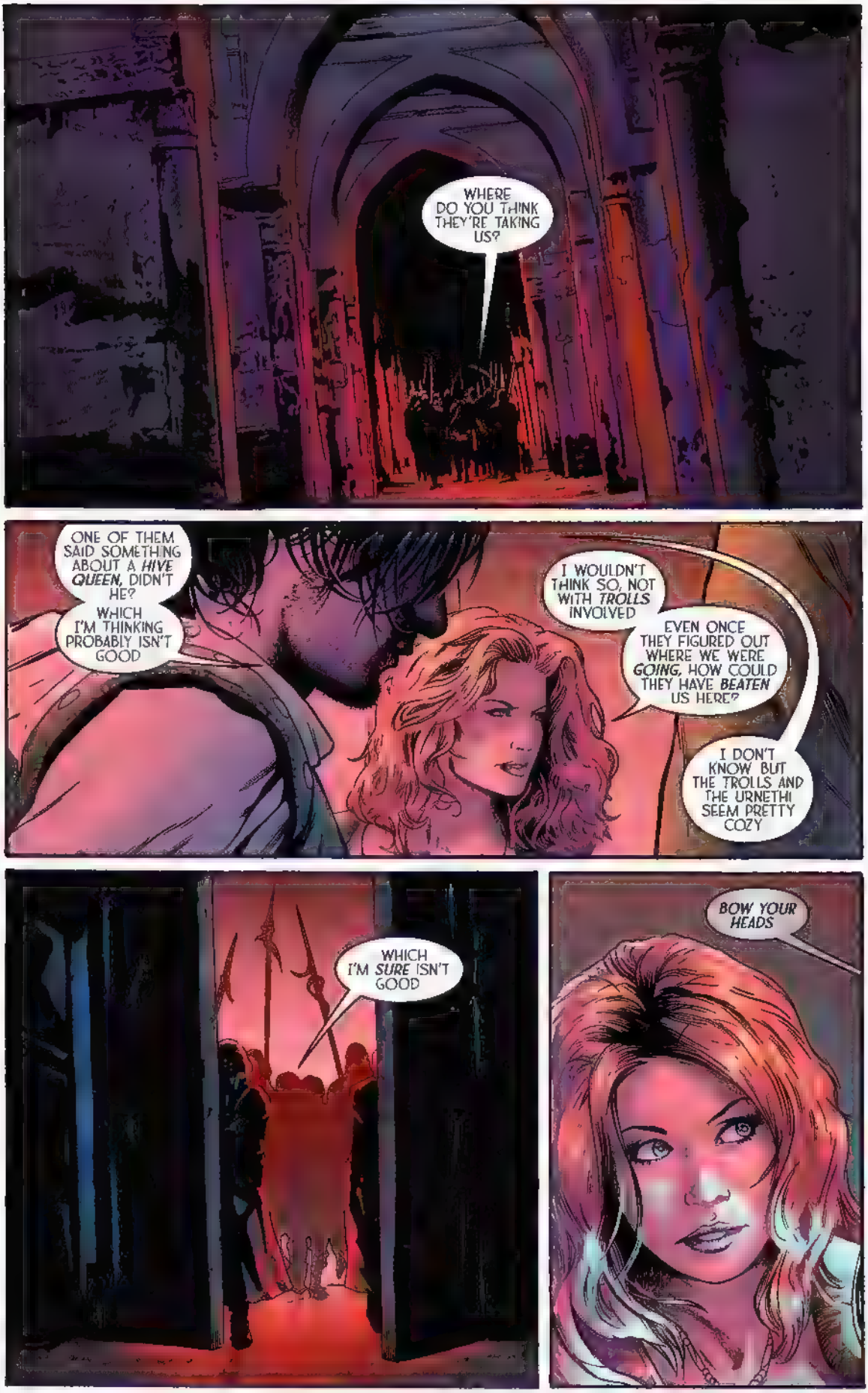
HOW NICE OF YOU TO COME TO *US*
YOU'VE GOT *TROLLS* AFTER YOU?
YOU NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT *TROLLS!*

SHUT UP AND GO!
NO WE'RE CUT OFF THAT WAY
YOU SURPRISE ME, HUMAN.
I'D HAVE THOUGHT BEING HURLED FROM THE CLIFFS OF ANKHARA WOULD BE ENOUGH TO END YOU.
I'M LUCKY
WE'LL SEE

TAKE THAT ONE ALIVE!
THE OTHERS DON'T MATTER!
GAAH!
CHANG
ARE YOU AS BRAVE WITHOUT YOUR BLADE, HUMAN?
COME A LITTLE CLOSER AND FIND OUT

AAAGH!
YOU DON'T LACK FOR *SPIRIT*, HUMAN. I'LL GIVE YOU THAT
NGH!
ghhhh.
GET YOUR HANDS *OFF* ME, YOU FILTHY WHORESONS!
I'LL CUT YOUR *THROATS*, I *SWEAR* I WILL!


TAKE HER BOW!
THE MASTER WILL WANT IT!
HRRK!
YOU?
YOU HELPED THE TROLLS DO THIS, YOU FILTHY LITTLE TOAD?
YOU'LL BE SORRY YOU WEREN'T A LITTLE MORE ACCOMODATING TO ME, WITCH
WHY DON'T YOU GO–
SWAK
BRING HER

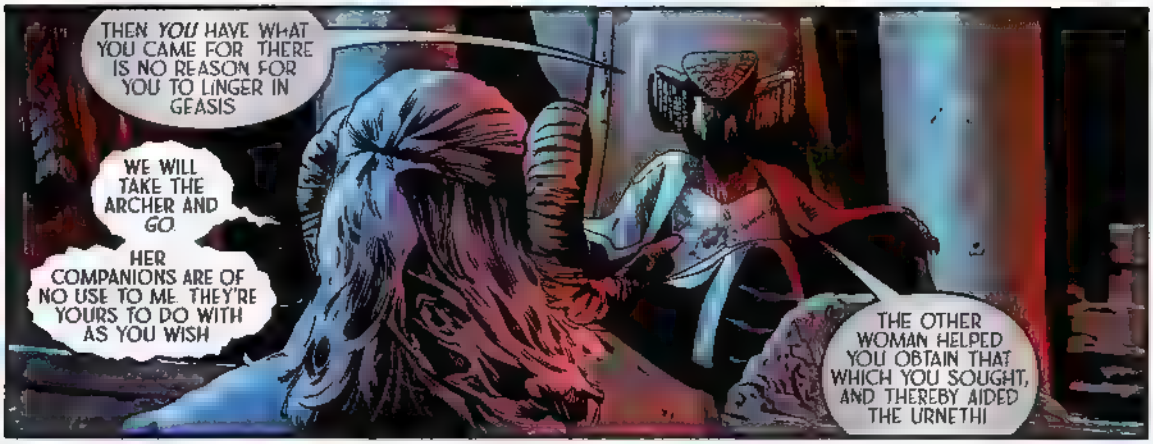

WHERE DO YOU THINK THEY'RE TAKING US?
ONE OF THEM SAID SOMETHING ABOUT A *HIVE QUEEN*, DIDN'T HE?
WHICH I'M THINKING PROBABLY ISN'T GOOD
I WOULDN'T THINK SO, NOT WITH *TROLLS* INVOLVED
EVEN ONCE THEY FIGURED OUT WHERE WE WERE *GOING*, HOW COULD THEY HAVE *BEATEN* US HERE?
I DON'T KNOW BUT THE TROLLS AND THE URNETHI SEEM PRETTY COZY
WHICH I'M *SURE* ISN'T GOOD
BOW YOUR HEADS

YOU ARE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE *HIVE QUEEN* OF THE URNETH!
THESE ARE THE ONES WE WERE *WARNED* ABOUT?

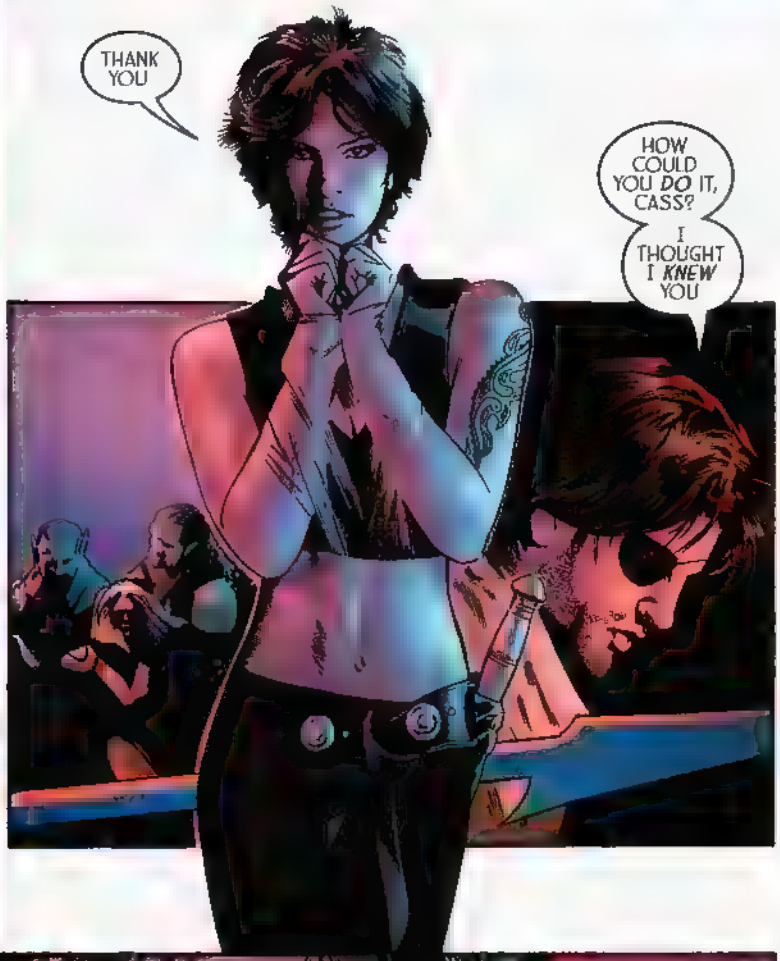
THESE ARE THE HUMANS WHO WOULD STEAL FROM THE URNETHI.
THE FEMALE WITH THE YELLOW HAIR, WITH THE *HELP* OF THESE OTHERS, INTENDED TO TAKE THE FRAGMENT OF AYDEN'S ARROW THAT THE URNETHI HOLD DEAR.
ALONG WITH WHATEVER *OTHER* OF YOUR TREASURES THEY COULD LAY THEIR HANDS ON.
THAT'S NOT *TRUE*
WE ONLY WANTED THE FRAGMENT SO WE COULD GATHER THEM ALL AND FINALLY *FREE* THE FIVE LANDS OF MORDATH. WE WOULDN'T—
SILENCE IN THE CHAMBER OF THE HIVE QUEEN
WE URNETHI *RARELY* HAVE DEALINGS WITH THAT WHICH LIES BEYOND OUR HIVE. YOUR WORLD IS *DISTASTEFUL* TO US.
BUT AT TIMES SUCH THINGS ARE *UNAVOIDABLE*. YOU ARE HERE NOW, AND THERE MUST BE A RESOLUTION.
IN TRUTH, *EACH* OF YOU HAS COME FOR THE SAME THING. YOU WANT THE *FRAGMENT*.
WHICH HAS SERVED AS A SYMBOL TO OUR KIND SINCE AYDEN SCATTERED THEM TO THE FIVE LANDS.

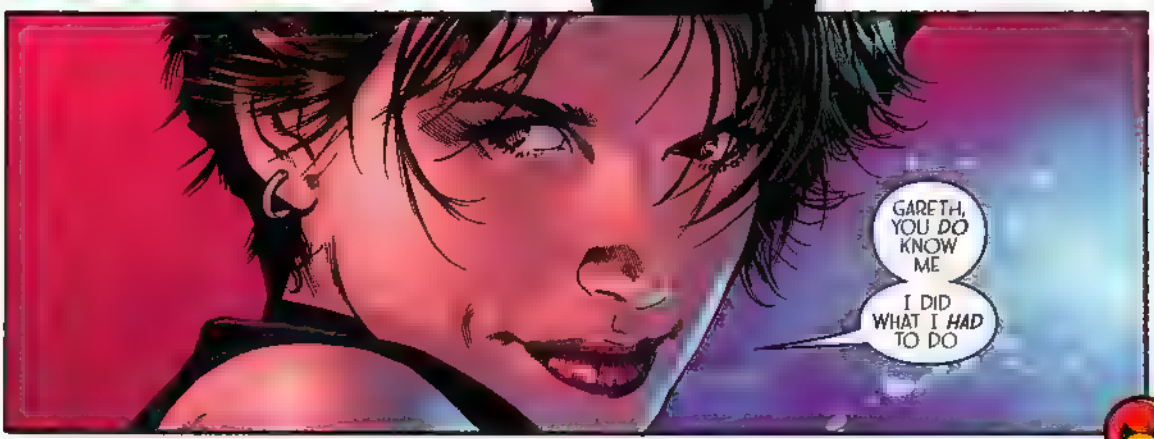
I WOULD REMIND YOU THAT MY LORD MORDATH WILL BE GRATEFUL TO THE URNETHI FOR THEIR AID IN PUTTING AN *END* TO THIS PLOT AGAINST HIM.
YOUR COOPERATION WOULD BE A MEANINGFUL DISPLAY OF *LOYALTY*.
IF HE HAS REASON, MORDATH CAN BE *MERCIFUL*
OR HE CAN BE MOST *UNFORGIVING*
I WOULD NOT *LIE* TO YOU. WE HAVE NO LOVE FOR YOUR LORD.
BUT WE URNETHI ARE FEW IN NUMBER COMPARED WITH THE HUMANS OR THE TROLLS. OUR WAYS ARE ANCIENT AND MUST BE PRESERVED.
MY SOLE CONCERN IS THE WELFARE OF MY PEOPLE.
AND I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO DO WHAT IS *BEST* FOR THEM
MORDATH WILL BE *APPRECIATIVE* OF YOUR AID WHEN I PLACE THIS IN HIS HAND
THIS AND THE *OTHER* FRAGMENTS THE WOMAN CARRIED
WHERE *ARE* THEY?
SHE DIDN'T *HAVE* THEM IN THE BAG

THEY'RE IN HER *RIGHT BOOT* I SAW HER *HIDE* THEM THERE BEFORE SHE WENT TO SLEEP LAST NIGHT
PROBABLY BECAUSE SHE DIDN'T *TRUST* ME
CASS?
WHAT
WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?*
I KNEW IT!
I KNEW YOU *COULDN'T* BE TRUSTED!
YOU WERE PLANNING TO *BETRAY* US ALL ALONG! YOU'RE SACRIFICING THE WHOLE OF THE *FIVE LANDS* TO SAVE YOUR OWN MISERABLE SKIN!
LET GO OF
HOLD HER *STILL*
MORDATH WILL BE *PLEASED*


THEN *YOU* HAVE WHAT YOU CAME FOR. THERE IS NO REASON FOR YOU TO LINGER IN GEASIS
WE WILL TAKE THE ARCHER AND *GO*.
HER COMPANIONS ARE OF NO USE TO ME. THEY'RE YOURS TO DO WITH AS YOU WISH
THE OTHER WOMAN HELPED YOU OBTAIN THAT WHICH YOU SOUGHT, AND THEREBY AIDED THE URNETHI

SHE MAY GO
THE *MAN* AND THE *PET* WILL BE FED TO THE ASCARIDS
THIS IS MY JUDGMENT


THANK YOU
HOW COULD YOU *DO* IT, CASS?
I THOUGHT I *KNEW* YOU


GARETH, YOU *DO* KNOW ME
I DID WHAT I *HAD* TO DO

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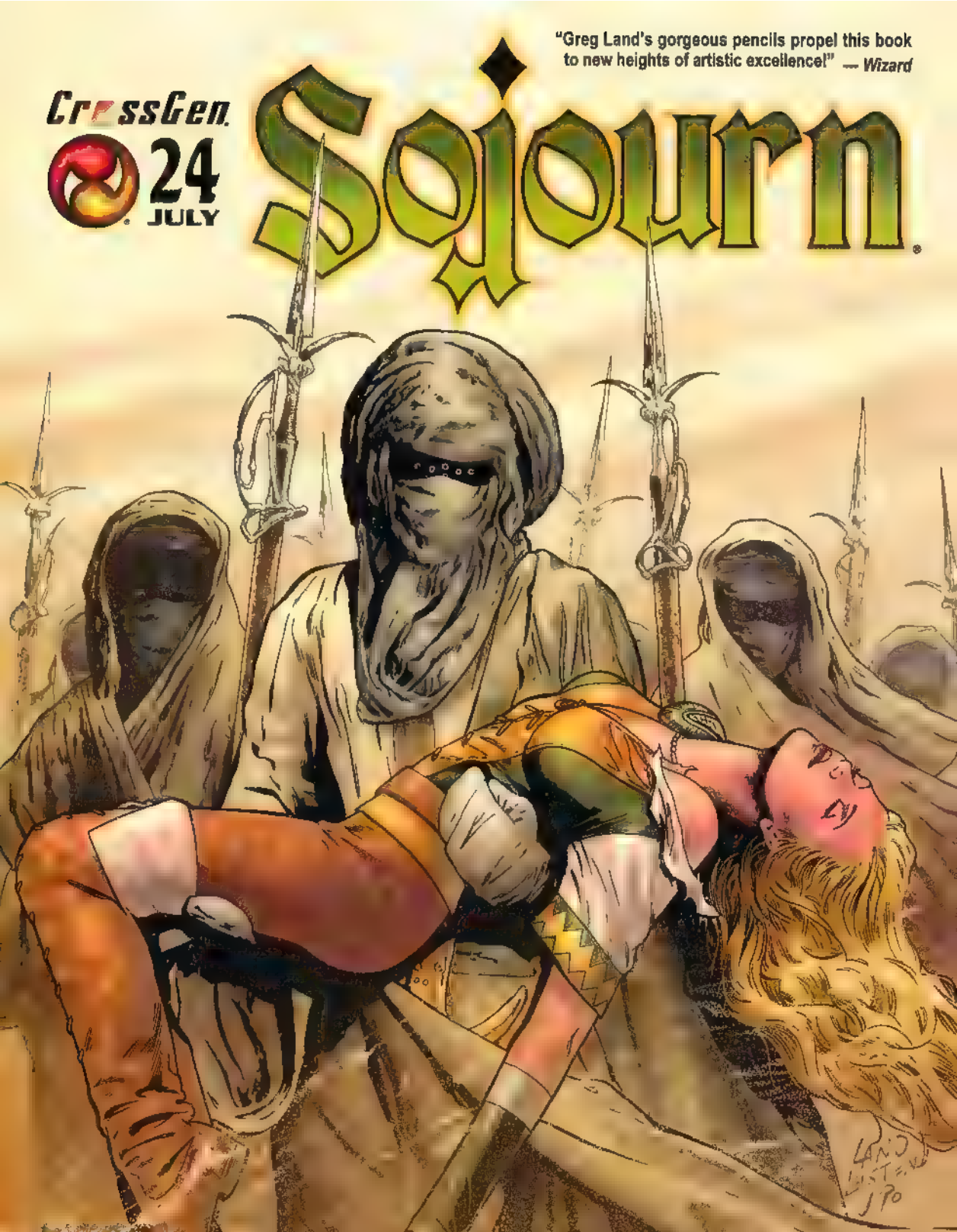

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Arwyn

Gareth

Cassidy

Bohr

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Swearing vengeance, Arwyn took up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments. Armed with Ayden's bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

After finding the First Fragment in Middelyn and the Second in Ankhara, Arwyn and Gareth were joined in Oudubai by the thief Cassidy, who led them into the desert in pursuit of the Third Fragment. However, the Urnethi, mysterious dwellers of the Wastes, captured our heroes, who were apparently betrayed by Cassidy. Arwyn was turned over to Bohr and his troll warriors, while Gareth was sentenced to death.

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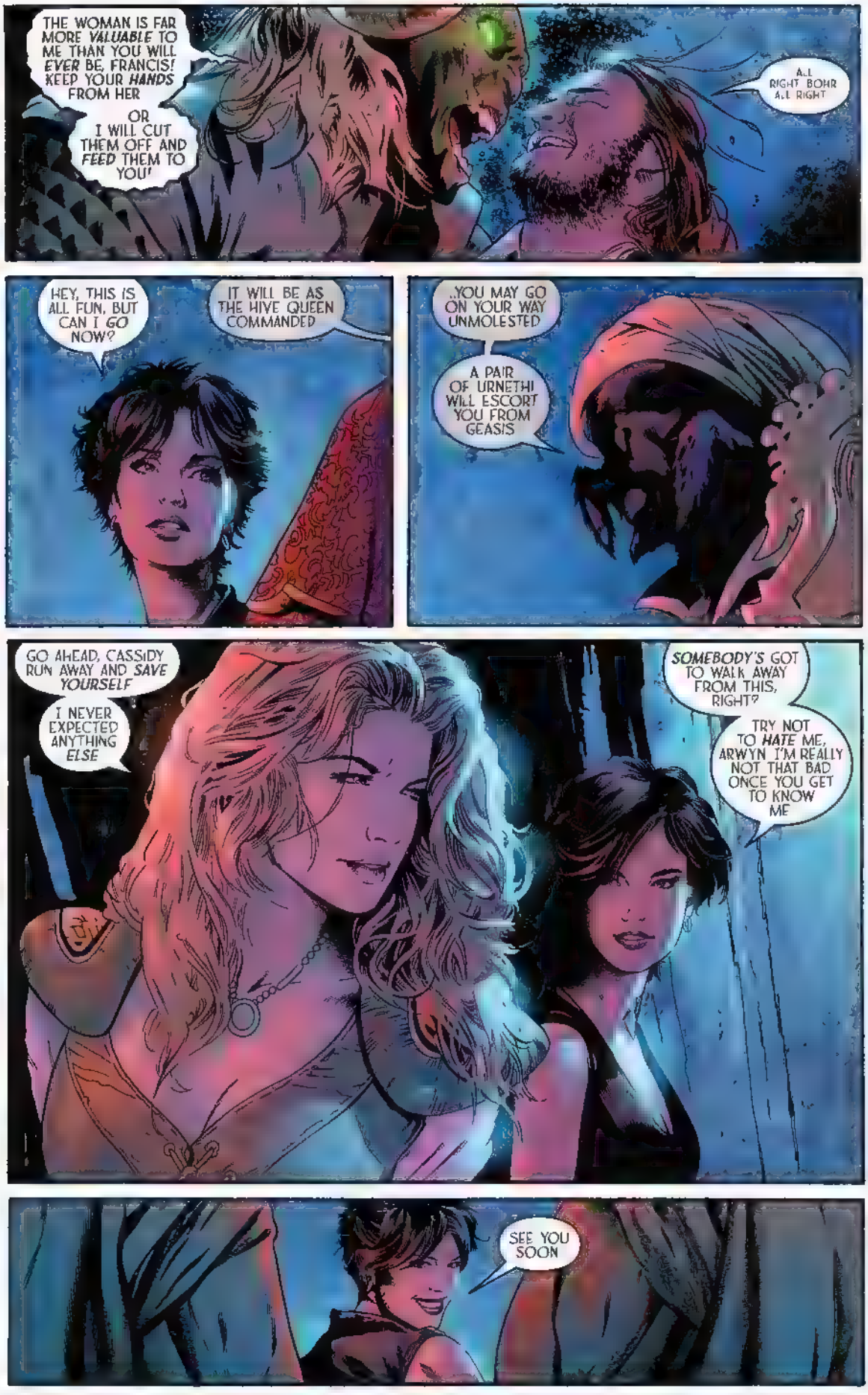
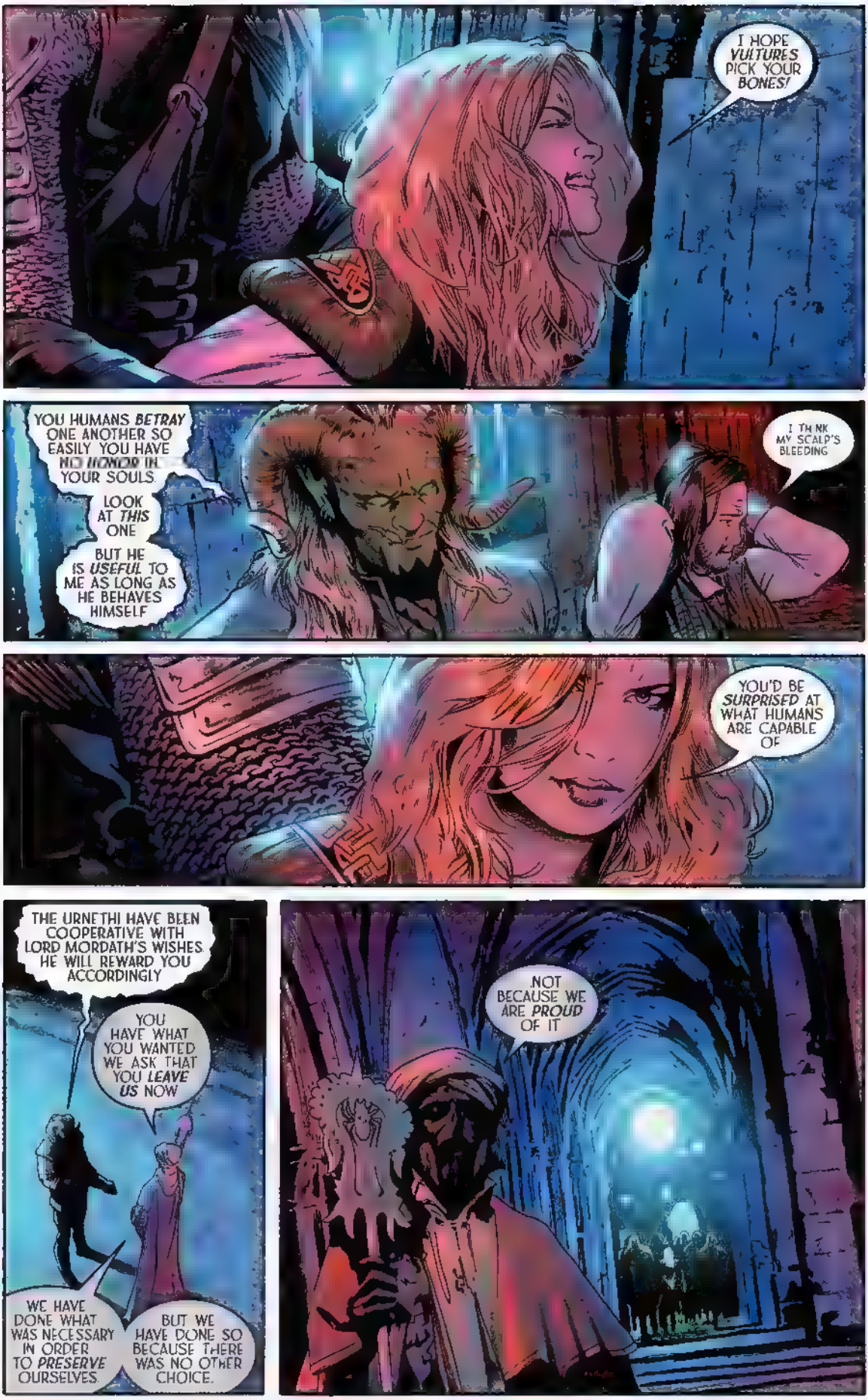
"I WAS PRETTY SURE THE QUEST WOULD END WITH *MORDATH* DEAD."

NOT *ME*
YOU KNOW, KREEG, IF I WERE *YOU*, I'D BEAT FEET
ALL *FOUR* OF THEM
OUT OF HERE IT'S NOT LIKE THE URNETHI HAVE PAID ANY *ATTENTION* TO US SINCE THEY STUCK US DOWN HERE
HWUFF
WELL, I APPRECIATE THE *LOYALTY*
BUT THERE'S NO SENSE IN YOU BEING AN *APPETIZER* TO MY MAIN COURSE

GRRRR
YEAH, I HEARD IT TOO, BOY
I KNOW WE *ALL* EVENTUALLY END UP AS *WORM FOOD*
BUT NOT LIKE *THIS*

SUCH TINY THINGS.
AND YOU BELIEVED THEY COULD LEAD TO OUR LORD'S DESTRUCTION.
YOURS IS AN OPTIMISTIC RACE.
MORDATH WILL FALL
IF IT'S NOT ME THAT BRINGS HIM DOWN, IT WILL BE SOMEONE ELSE
DID HE ASK YOU?
DID HE?
I'LL TEACH YOU TO KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT, YOU—
AAAH!


THE WOMAN IS FAR MORE *VALUABLE* TO ME THAN YOU WILL *EVER* BE, FRANCIS! KEEP YOUR *HANDS* FROM HER
OR I WILL CUT THEM OFF AND *FEED* THEM TO YOU!
ALL RIGHT BOHR ALL RIGHT
HEY, THIS IS ALL FUN, BUT CAN I *GO* NOW?
IT WILL BE AS THE HIVE QUEEN COMMANDED
..YOU MAY GO ON YOUR WAY UNMOLESTED
A PAIR OF URNETHI WILL ESCORT YOU FROM GEASIS
GO AHEAD, CASSIDY RUN AWAY AND *SAVE YOURSELF*
I NEVER EXPECTED ANYTHING *ELSE*
SOMEBODY'S GOT TO WALK AWAY FROM THIS, RIGHT?
TRY NOT TO *HATE* ME, ARWYN I'M REALLY NOT THAT BAD ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW ME
SEE YOU SOON


I HOPE VULTURES PICK YOUR BONES!
YOU HUMANS BETRAY ONE ANOTHER SO EASILY YOU HAVE NO HONOR IN YOUR SOULS
LOOK AT THIS ONE
BUT HE IS USEFUL TO ME AS LONG AS HE BEHAVES HIMSELF
I THINK MY SCALP'S BLEEDING
YOU'D BE SURPRISED AT WHAT HUMANS ARE CAPABLE OF
THE URNETHI HAVE BEEN COOPERATIVE WITH LORD MORDATH'S WISHES. HE WILL REWARD YOU ACCORDINGLY
YOU HAVE WHAT YOU WANTED. WE ASK THAT YOU LEAVE US NOW
WE HAVE DONE WHAT WAS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO PRESERVE OURSELVES.
BUT WE HAVE DONE SO BECAUSE THERE WAS NO OTHER CHOICE.
NOT BECAUSE WE ARE PROUD OF IT

CHANK
ONE DOWN
=NNF=
GRRUFF
RUFF
RUFF
RORRRR
YIIIII
KREEG!
NOT GOOD, NOT GOOD

I MEAN *REALLY.*
WHAT WOULD YOU DO *WITHOUT* ME?
CASSIDY?
CASSIDY!

SO
HAPPY TO SEE ME?
STUNNED IS MORE LIKE IT
BE LIKE THAT THEN
BUT AT LEAST YOU CAN SHOW ME A LITTLE APPRECIATION
WHO CARRIES A LOCK PICK FOR EVERY OCCASION?
WHO CAN'T YOU LIVE WITHOUT? COME ON, SAY IT
CASS

...MOVE!
NEXT TIME YOU KILL A GIANT, MAN-EATING MONSTER
MAKE SURE YOU KILL IT!

WHAT DO YOU SAY, KREEG? HOW ABOUT WE MAKE OURSELVES *SCARCE* NOW THAT—
KREEG?
COME ON, BOY, DON'T DO THIS. ARWYN'S *ALREADY* MAD ENOUGH AT ME
YOU'RE GONNA BE ALL RIGHT, AREN'T YOU? I *NEED* YOU
GOOD BOY!
HWUFF
HOW COME *HE* GETS ALL THE AFFECTION?
BECAUSE *HE* DIDN'T SELL ME OUT TO THE BUG FACES WHO *PUT* ME DOWN IN THIS HOLE
LET'S GET *OUT* OF HERE BEFORE ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE THINGS COMES ALONG

NOW
YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF EXPLAINING TO DO
WHAT, NOT EVEN A THANK YOU?
THAT'S GRATITUDE FOR YOU.
GARETH, I TOLD YOU YOU KNOW ME
YOU KNOW ME WELL ENOUGH TO KNOW I'D NEVER SELL YOU OUT
BUT IF AT LEAST ONE OF US WASN'T FREE, WE WERE ALL GOING TO END UP DEAD.
SO I TOOK THE GAMBLE THAT THEY D LET ME GO IF I GAVE THEM YOU
IT WAS THE ONLY CHANCE WE HAD
I CAME BACK AS SOON AS THE TWO GUARDS WHO WERE ESCORTING ME HAD A LITTLE ACCIDENT
I GOT YOUR SWORD AND SOME ROPE AND HERE I AM
WHAT ABOUT ARWYN?
WHAT ABOUT ARWYN?
CASS, JUST BECAUSE YOU TWO CAN'T STAND EACH OTHER
KIDDING
I'M KIDDING
I CAME TO GET YOU FIRST BECAUSE I FIGURED YOU WERE A LOT CLOSER TO BEING A SNACK
AND, IF WE'RE GOING TO GET ARWYN BACK FROM THE TROLLS, WE'LL NEED AT LEAST TWO OF US
I'VE GOT A PLAN

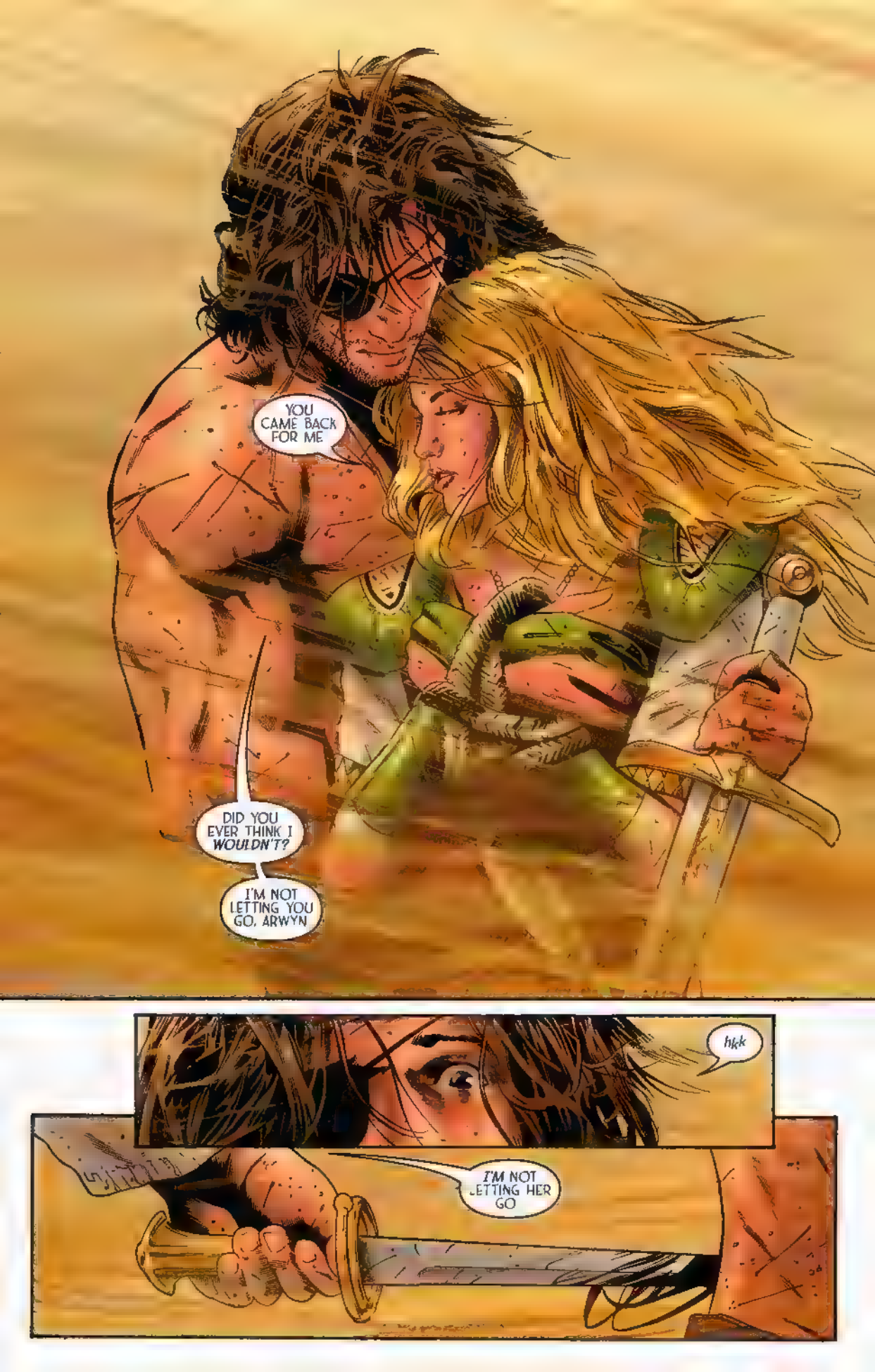
THERE'S A *STORM* BLOWING IN. . .
WE NEED TO BE ON OUR WAY BEFORE IT *REACHES* US.
THE ONLY THING WORSE THAN THE *SMELL* OF THESE BEASTS THE URNETHI GAVE US IS THEIR *DISPOSITION*
THEY WILL SERVE US FAR BETTER IN THE WASTES THAN WOULD HORSES.
THE URNETHI WELL KNOW TO STAY IN THE GOOD GRACES OF THOSE WHO SERVE MORDATH.
COME
NO ESCAPE FROM ME THIS TIME, ARCHER
YOU HAVE NO FRIENDS TO *RESCUE* YOU HERE

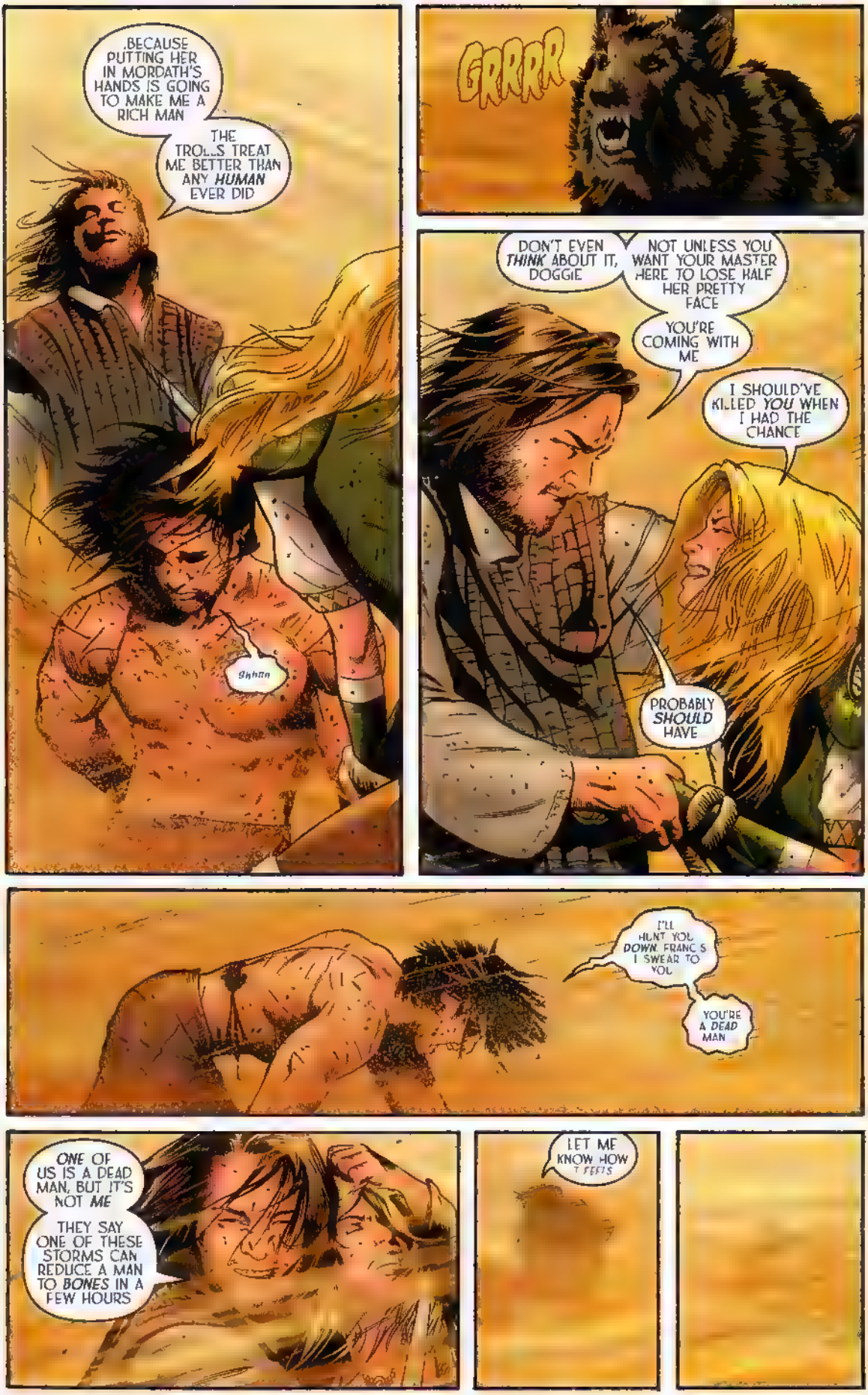
HOLD!
THE HIVE QUEEN WISHES THIS WOMAN BROUGHT BEFORE HER AGAIN
SHE WILL ACCOMPANY US
AND BE RETURNED TO YOU WHEN THE QUEEN IS FINISHED WITH HER
A STORM BEARS DOWN
WE MUST LEAVE NOW IF WE ARE TO AVOID BEING SWEPT UP IN IT.
WHAT PROMPTS THIS? WHAT DOES THE HIVE QUEEN WANT WITH THE WOMAN?
IT IS NOT FOR ME
OR YOU
...TO QUESTION THE QUEEN'S WISHES
THE WOMAN MUST COME WITH US

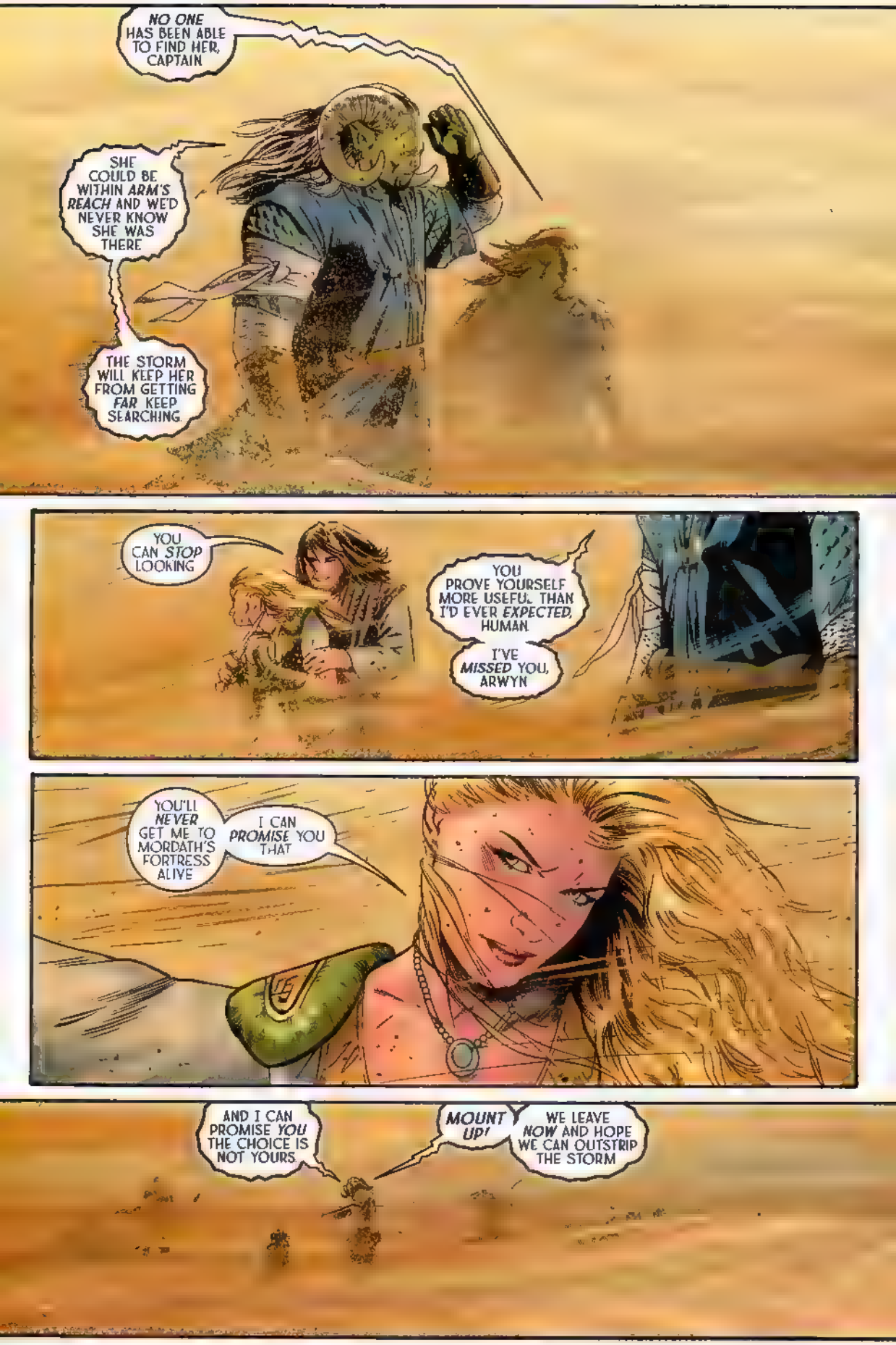
WAIT.
Ah.
YOU HAVE MORE LIVES THAN ANY TEN MEN.
I'M HOPING
GARETH?
WELL, THE SNEAKY WAY WAS WORTH A TRY...
THE HUMANS ARE AMONG US!
CUT THEM DOWN!

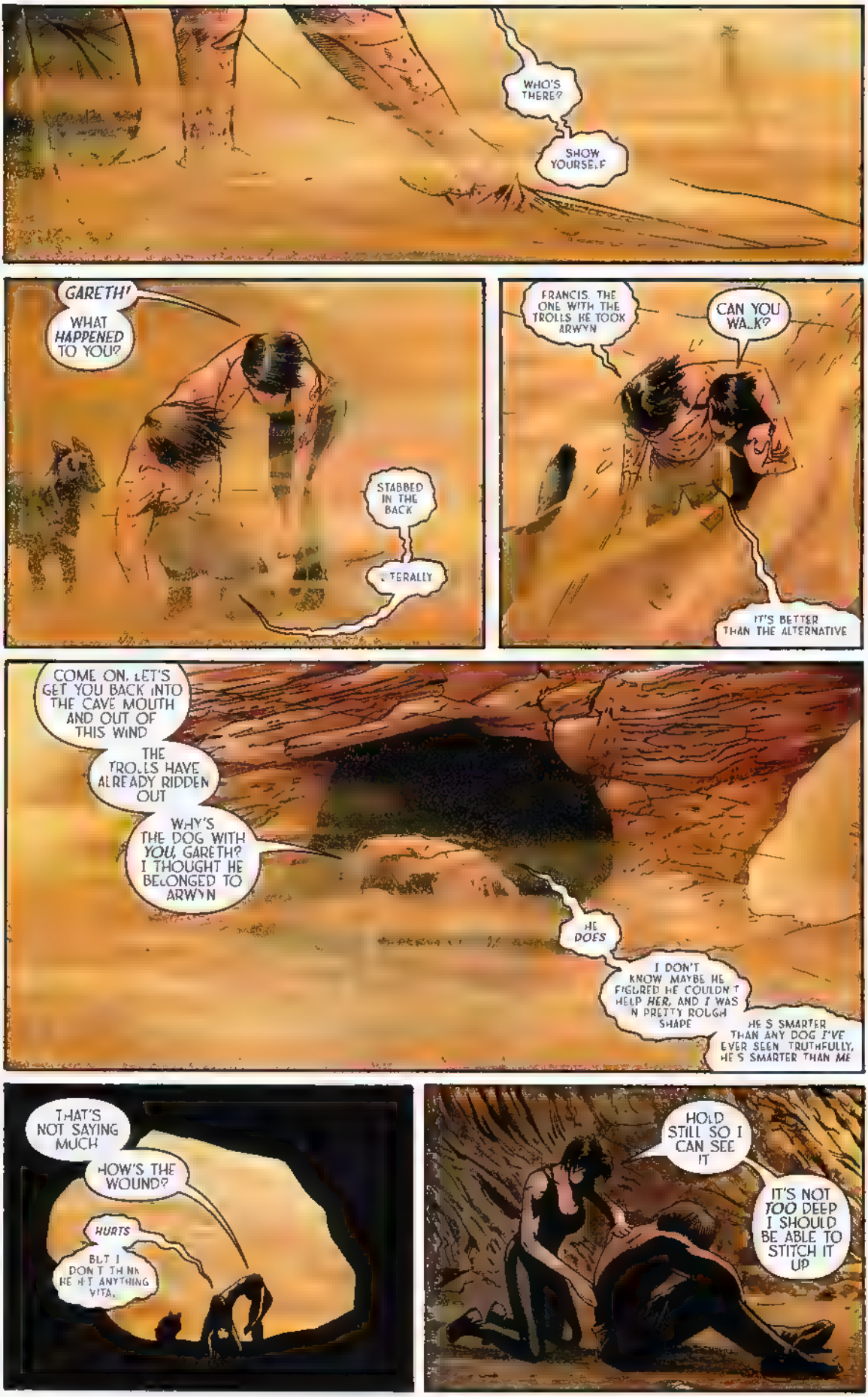
ARWYN, GO!
GET AWAY WHILE YOU CAN!
CASS.
THEY'RE ON TO US!
YOU ⇒NGH⇐ THINK?
YOU GO NOWHERE, WOMAN!
GRRARR

STANDING AND FIGHTING SEEMS LIKE A GOOD WAY TO GET *DEAD*
SO COME AND *FIND ME* IF YOU WANT ME
WHERE *ARE* YOU, HUMAN?
FIGHT ME!
ARWYN!
ARWYN!
GARETH?
IS THAT *YOU?*
OVER HERE!


YOU CAME BACK FOR ME
DID YOU EVER THINK I *WOULDN'T?*
I'M NOT LETTING YOU GO, ARWYN
hkk
I'M NOT LETTING HER GO


BECAUSE PUTTING HER IN MORDATH'S HANDS IS GOING TO MAKE ME A RICH MAN
THE TROLLS TREAT ME BETTER THAN ANY HUMAN EVER DID
Shhhh
GRRRR
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, DOGGIE
NOT UNLESS YOU WANT YOUR MASTER HERE TO LOSE HALF HER PRETTY FACE
YOU'RE COMING WITH ME
I SHOULD'VE KILLED YOU WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE
PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE
I'LL HUNT YOU DOWN. FRANCS I SWEAR TO YOU
YOU'RE A DEAD MAN
ONE OF US IS A DEAD MAN, BUT IT'S NOT ME
THEY SAY ONE OF THESE STORMS CAN REDUCE A MAN TO BONES IN A FEW HOURS
LET ME KNOW HOW IT FEELS


NO ONE HAS BEEN ABLE TO FIND HER, CAPTAIN
SHE COULD BE WITHIN ARM'S REACH AND WE'D NEVER KNOW SHE WAS THERE
THE STORM WILL KEEP HER FROM GETTING FAR KEEP SEARCHING.
YOU CAN STOP LOOKING
YOU PROVE YOURSELF MORE USEFUL THAN I'D EVER EXPECTED, HUMAN.
I'VE MISSED YOU, ARWYN
YOU'LL NEVER GET ME TO MORDATH'S FORTRESS ALIVE
I CAN PROMISE YOU THAT
AND I CAN PROMISE YOU THE CHOICE IS NOT YOURS.
MOUNT UP!
WE LEAVE NOW AND HOPE WE CAN OUTSTRIP THE STORM


WHO'S THERE?
SHOW YOURSELF
GARETH!
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
STABBED IN THE BACK
LITERALLY
FRANCIS. THE ONE WITH THE TROLLS HE TOOK ARWYN
CAN YOU WALK?
IT'S BETTER THAN THE ALTERNATIVE
COME ON. LET'S GET YOU BACK INTO THE CAVE MOUTH AND OUT OF THIS WIND
THE TROLLS HAVE ALREADY RIDDEN OUT
WHY'S THE DOG WITH YOU, GARETH? I THOUGHT HE BELONGED TO ARWYN
HE DOES
I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE HE FIGURED HE COULDN'T HELP HER, AND I WAS IN PRETTY ROUGH SHAPE
HE'S SMARTER THAN ANY DOG I'VE EVER SEEN. TRUTHFULLY, HE'S SMARTER THAN ME
THAT'S NOT SAYING MUCH
HOW'S THE WOUND?
HURTS
BUT I DON'T THINK HE'S HIT ANYTHING VITAL.
HOLD STILL SO I CAN SEE IT
IT'S NOT TOO DEEP I SHOULD BE ABLE TO STITCH IT UP

FOR ALL THE *GOOD* IT WILL DO
WE *CAN'T* GO BACK TO GEASIS, WE *CAN'T* SET OUT AFTER ARWYN UNTIL THE STORM PASSES.
AND EVEN WHEN WE *CAN*, WE'RE DEEP IN THE WASTES WITH NO MOUNTS.
THIS WAS A *DISASTER*
NOT ENTIRELY
HOW DID YOU GET
I'M A *THIEF*
I PICKED HIS POCKET WHEN I BRUSHED UP AGAINST HIM HE NEVER EVEN KNEW IT
THEN IF WE *LIVE* LONG ENOUGH
THE *QUEST* GOES ON

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Thanks to Ron Marz for getting the quest started!

Welcome aboard Ian Edginton next issue!

The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa

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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Cassidy

Bohr

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Ayden retreated to the solitude from which he'd come, but broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb and again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn took up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments. Armed with Ayden's bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

Having found the First and Second Fragments, Arwyn and Gareth journeyed to Oudubai where the thief Cassidy led them into the desert in pursuit of the Third Fragment. However, the Urnethi, the mysterious dwellers of the Wastes, betrayed our heroes to Mordath's trolls, led by commander Bohr. Now Arwyn is in Bohr's custody, being escorted back to Mordath's fortress, while Gareth and Cassidy are in possession of all three Fragments.

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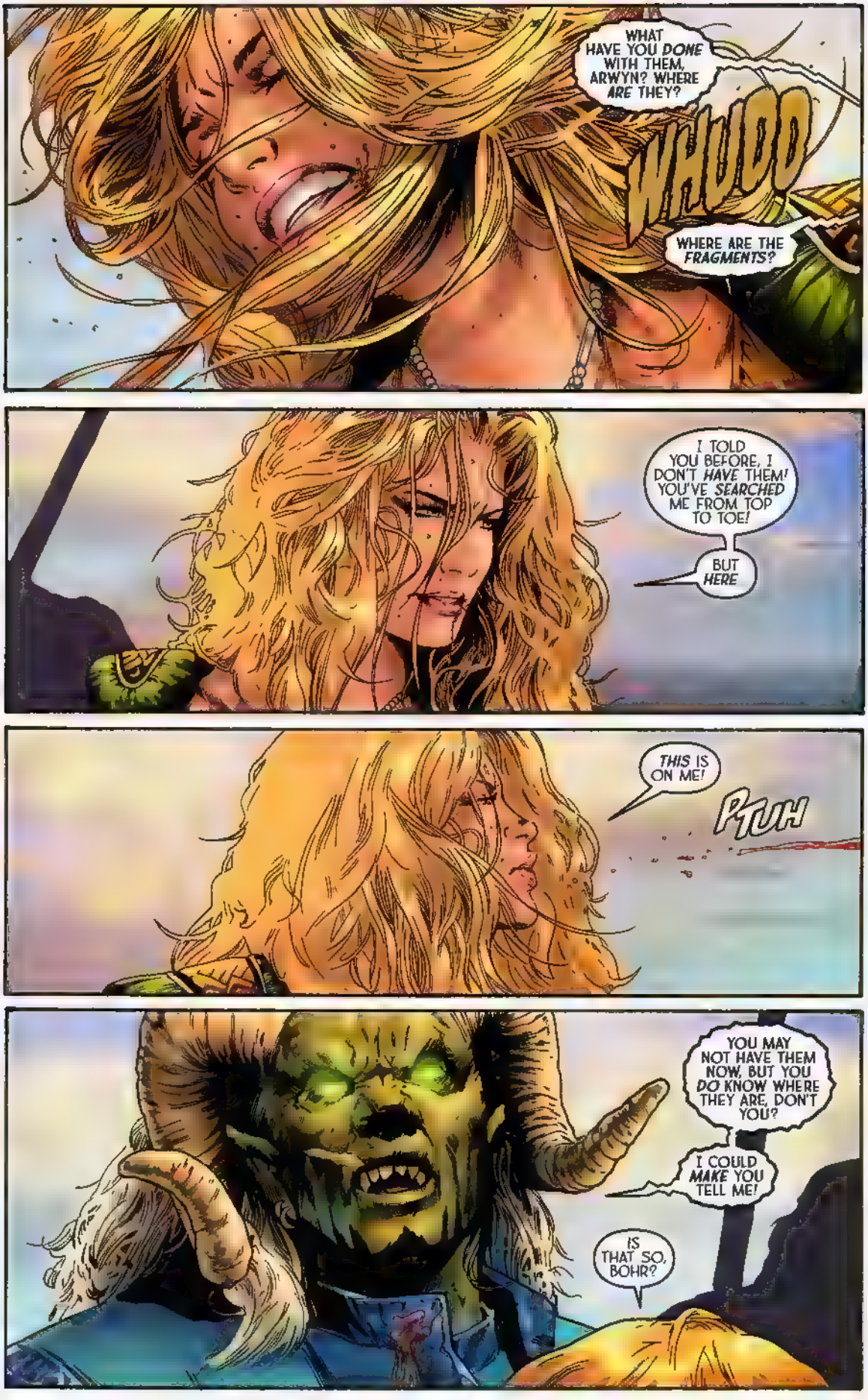

WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE* WITH THEM, ARWYN? WHERE *ARE* THEY?
WHUDD
WHERE ARE THE *FRAGMENTS*?
I TOLD YOU BEFORE, I DON'T *HAVE* THEM! YOU'VE *SEARCHED* ME FROM TOP TO TOE!
BUT *HERE*
THIS IS ON ME!
PTUH
YOU MAY NOT HAVE THEM NOW, BUT YOU *DO* KNOW WHERE THEY ARE, DON'T YOU?
I COULD *MAKE* YOU TELL ME!
IS THAT SO, BOHR?

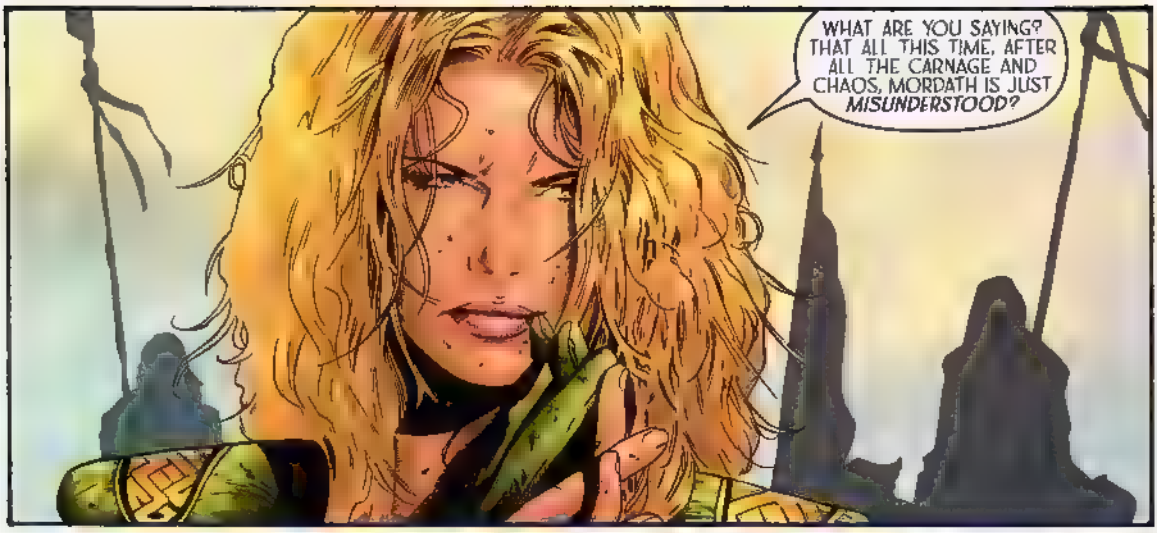
YOU AND WHOSE ARMY?

Heh.

Heh! Hah! Hah!

HAH HAH HARR!

I WASN'T JOKING
I KNOW THAT'S WHY IT WAS SO AMUSING
PERHAPS YOU'LL BE ABLE TO ENTERTAIN MORDATH WHEN WE DELIVER YOU TO HIS FORTRESS
I DIDN'T KNOW TROLLS HAD A SENSE OF HUMOR
THERE'S MUCH YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT US. YET YOU JUDGE US ALL THE SAME.
YOUR KIND ONLY SEES WHAT IT WISHES TO.
I SEE THE BODIES OF MY HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER, GUTTED BY TROLL BLADES!
DON'T LOOK TO ME FOR REMORSE, WOMAN. IT WAS SEARED FROM MY SOUL LONG YEARS PAST
I DON'T EXPECT ANY, NOT FROM A CREATURE OF MORDATH'S. HE WAS A DESPOT BEFORE
NOW HE'S RETURNED AS THE MONSTER HE TRULY IS, WITH BEASTS LIKE YOU AT HIS BECK AND CALL
SO IT WOULD SEEM. BUT IT'S LONG BEEN KNOWN THAT HISTORY IS WRITTEN BY THE VICTORS
WHEN THE TRUTH IS LOST IN THE DUST OF AGES, ONLY THE LIES PREVAIL

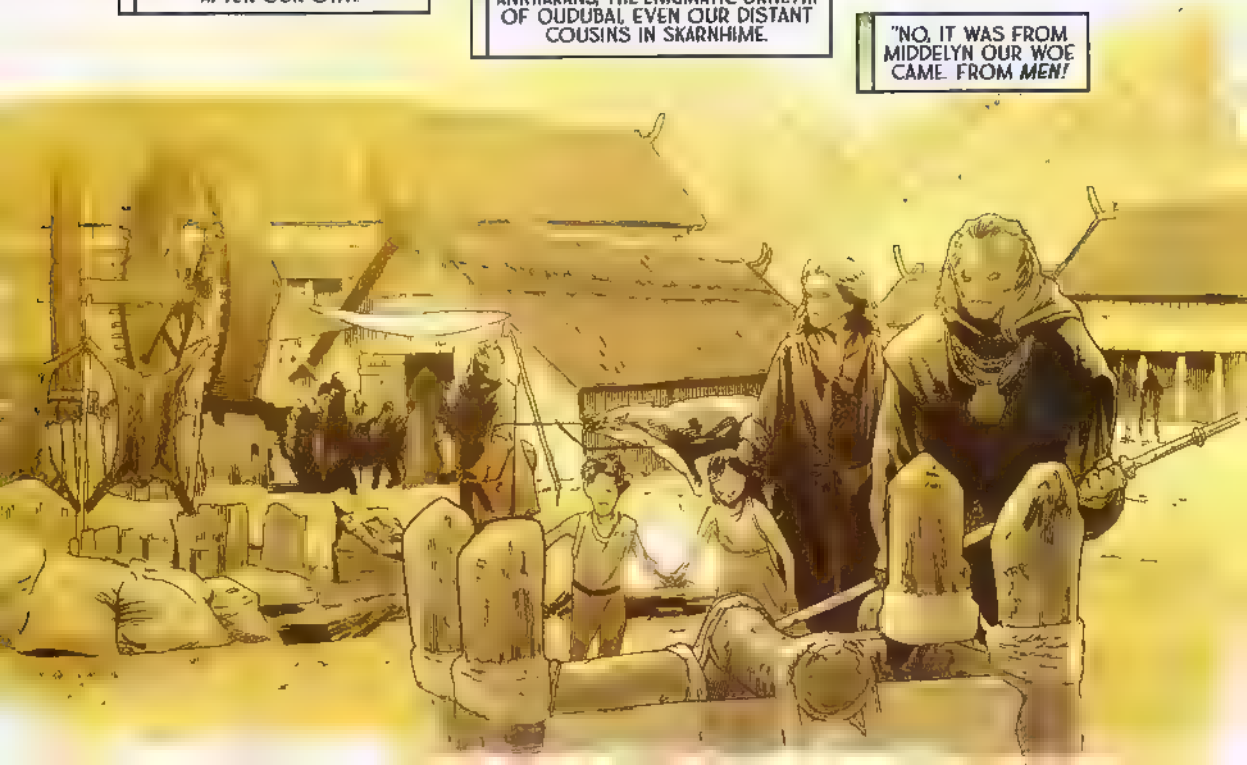


WALK A LEAGUE IN *MY* BOOTS, WOMAN, THEN WE'LL SEE WHAT SONG YOU SING!
MINE IS AN OLD RACE, AND *LONG LIVED* THE THREE CENTURIES SINCE MORDATH'S FIRST REIGN ARE BUT A FEW LIFETIMES FOR US.
WE REMEMBER WELL THE *INEQUITIES* YOUR BREED INFLICTED UPON US

"WE WERE A PROUD PEOPLE, A *STRONG* PEOPLE. LIFE IN THE DEEP WOODS OF GRINBOR WAS HARD, BUT WE LOOKED AFTER OUR OWN.

"WE HAD NO INTEREST IN THE LANDS BEYOND— THE ARROGANT ANKHARANS, THE ENIGMATIC URNETHI OF OUDUBAL, EVEN OUR DISTANT COUSINS IN SKARNHIME.

"NO, IT WAS FROM MIDDELYN OUR WOE CAME. FROM *MEN!*



"THEY FELLED THE GREAT FORESTS. TORE THE GOD OAKS FROM THEIR SACRED GROVES AND USED THEM FOR LUMBER AND FIREWOOD.
"THEY BROKE THE LAND WITH THEIR PLOWS. HUNTED OUR GAME WITH ABANDON. DAMMED RIVERS AND CREEKS.
"MEN STRIPPED THE VERY *LIFE* FROM THE SOIL ITSELF, AND WHEN IT COULD BLEED NO MORE, THEY MOVED ON TO PLUNDER EVEN MORE OF OUR REALM.
"WE *RESPONDED* IN THE ONLY WAY WE KNEW

"AND SO DID MEN.
"WE FOUGHT WELL, WORTHY OF SONG AND SAGA. BUT OUR LONGEVITY IS A *CURSE* AS MUCH AS IT IS A *BOON*.
"WE LIVE LONG, BUT WE ARE SLOW TO REPLENISH OUR NUMBERS. WE WERE SOON OVERWHELMED BY THE SHEER *MULTITUDE* OF OUR OPPONENTS."

"WE WITHDREW DEEP INTO THE DARK WOODS, *EXTINCTION* SNAPPING AT OUR HEELS.

"INSTEAD, WE FOUND OUR SALVATION

"*MORDATH.*

"MANY WANTED TO PUT HIM TO THE SWORD, BUT *MARTA*, A HEALER, COUNSELED OTHERWISE.

"WE HAD ONLY ENCOUNTERED MEN ON THE *BATTLEFIELD*. THIS WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY ONE CLOSE AT HAND.

"BUT MORDATH WAS NO *ORDINARY* MAN. HE HAD NO *FEAR* OF US, OF WHAT WE MIGHT DO TO HIM.

"HE HAD FOUND HIS *WIFE* BUTCHERED, HIS *CHILD* SLAUGHTERED BY HIS OWN KIND. HE HAD BEEN LEFT FOR DEAD.

'ONLY *ONE* FIRE ROARED IN HIS HEART NOW

"*REVENGE!*

"WHERE *OTHERS* OF MY KIN HAD FAILED, THIS *OUTSIDER* SUCCEEDED IN UNITING OUR DISPARATE CLANS.

"BY THEIR TENS OF THOUSANDS THEY CAME, RALLYING TO HIS CALL FROM FAR AND WIDE

"WE WERE NO LONGER CLANS. WE WERE AN *ARMY!*

"AND AS AN ARMY, WE WENT TO *WAR*

"THE FIVE LANDS FELL BEFORE US LIKE WHEAT BEFORE THE SCYTHE. WE CHRISTENED THE LAND WITH BLOOD

"BUT WITH THE BIRTH OF OUR EMPIRE SO CLOSE AT HAND, ALL WAS *LOST* TO THE GATHERED FORCES OF THE OTHER RACES.

"MORDATH WAS *SLAIN.*

"OUR VENGEANCE *ROUTED.*"

FOR THE NEXT THREE CENTURIES, WE WERE HUNTED LIKE ANIMALS.
A *BOUNTY* ON ANY TROLL HEAD
WE HAD BECOME A *BLIGHTED* RACE. BUT WE ARE *PATIENT*. WE KNEW OUR TIME WOULD COME AGAIN.
AND SO IT HAS.
THE WHEEL HAS TURNED MORDATH HAS *RETURNED* TO US
THE FIVE LANDS WILL TASTE OUR *BITTER* VENGEANCE YET AGAIN.
AND WHERE WILL IT *END?*
WHEN EVERYONE IN THE *WORLD* HAS EITHER BEEN S..AIN OR FORCED BENEATH THE YOKE OF MORDATH'S TYRANNY
WHAT HAPPENS *THEN?*
HOW MUCH *BLOOD* IS ENOUGH TO SATISFY YOU?
KRPP
HGII!

STAND TO!
AMBUSH!
NO, IT'S WORSE
" A RAZORMOUTH!"
ROARR!

NOT ONE..
A NEST!
SKREE!!
Gahhk!
HOLD YOUR GROUND!
STAND AND FIGHT!

HSSSSS...
SOMEBODY CUT ME LOOSE!
SNAKT!
Nuhh
FREE ME. GIVE ME MY BOW
I CAN HELP!
HOW

" BY PUTTING AN ARROW IN MY BACK?"
THIS ISN'T HAPPENING THIS ISN'T HAPPENING
IF ANYONE UP THERE IS LISTENING, IT'S ME FRANCIS GET ME OUT OF THIS AND I SWEAR I'LL BE GOOD THE REST OF MY LIFE!
I'LL SAY MY DEVOTIONS EVERY DAY BE NICE TO OLD FOLKS AND CHILDREN GET A REGULAR JOB MARRY A GIRL MY MOM WILL LIKE
JUST DON'T LET ME DIE!
NYARRGH!
I'M RUNNING AWAY NOW NO ONE SEES ME
LITTLE FEET
LITTLE FEET
I CAN DO THIS
I CAN DO IT

Hah!
GODS! WHO NEEDS 'EM? I'M
SKREEE!!
oh
HEY, COME ON, I WAS ONLY JOKING
SKREE!
SKREE!
SKREE!
AGHH, NO
GET OFF, GET
...EYAAAGH

COME ON!
COME ON!
COME ON COME ON
HSSSSSSSSSS
SKRIIAAA

I TOLD YOU I COULD HELP
THEN LET'S FINISH THIS!
THOOM

GRAAAH!
THUNK
BOOM
BEHIND YOU!
THAT'S THE LAST!
TROOM

WELL
THIS IS INTERESTING
INDEED
THE ADVANTAGE IS YOURS
YOU HAVE THE BOW
THE CHOICE IS YOURS
ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE ME USE IT?
NO
I STILL INTEND TO DESTROY MORDATH

AND I WILL *STOP* YOU
BUT NOT TODAY
TODAY YOU HAVE EARNED YOUR LIFE
AND YOU YOURS.
ONE *LAST* THING
FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, YOU HAVE MY *SYMPATHIES* FOR THE LOSS OF YOUR KIN.
I
THANK YOU

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Arwyn

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Having already found the First and Second Fragments, Arwyn and Gareth were led into Oudubai by the thief Cassidy in pursuit of the Third Fragment. Their desert adventure ended with Gareth and Cassidy in possession of the three Fragments, and Arwyn a prisoner of Mordath's trolls, led by the savage Bohr. During the journey to deliver their prisoner to Mordath's fortress, ferocious denizens of the steppes attacked and slaughtered the trolls. Bohr and Arwyn survived by aiding one another in the battle, then went their separate ways.

Sojourn® vol. 1 issue 26. SEPTEMBER 2003 FIRST PRINTING. Published by CrossGen Comics, LLC. Office of publication: 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar, Florida 34677. **Sojourn®**, **CrossGen®**, **CrossGen Comics®**, **CrossGeneration®**, and the **CrossGen sigil®** are registered trademarks of CrossGen Intellectual Property, LLC. A prominent **Sojourn®** characters and images are Trademark and Copyright 2003 CrossGen Intellectual Property, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. The stories, incidents and characters in this publication are fictional. Any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reproduced in any form without the express written consent of CrossGen Comics, LLC. PRINTED IN CANADA.

I AM MORDATH
WARLORD
REVENANT
SCOURGE OF THE FIVE LANDS!

LOOK UPON MY WORKS, YE MIGHTY, AND DESPAIR!

I HAVE SET NATIONS SWIMMING IN BLOOD AND FIRE
I HAVE BROKEN KINGDOMS
SHATTERED ARMIES WITH THE FORCE OF MY WILL
THE VICTORY DENIED ME THREE CENTURIES PAST IS FINALLY MINE
SO WHY DOES IT TASTE LIKE ASHES IN MY MOUTH?
WHY DOES IT TASTE OF DEFEAT?
WHY DO I TORMENT MYSELF WITH QUESTIONS TO WHICH I ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER?

WHO IS HE *REALLY*, THAS' WHAT I WANT'S *T'KNOW!*
HE *SAYS* HE'S MORDATH, BUT HE DON'T *LOOK* LIKE NONE O' THE PICTURES IN THE SCROLLS AN' SAGAS, DO HE?
HE COMES *SWANIN'* BACK 'ERE LIKE HE OWNS TH' PLACE. GIVIN' *ORDERS* AN' *ROASTIN'* FOLK WHO LOOK AT 'IM FUNNY!
IT AIN'T *RIGHT*, I TELL YAH!
YEAH!
RARRH!
AN' WHAT'S *WORSE*, HE'S *'UMAN!* SINCE WHEN DOES *TROLLS* TAKE ORDERS FROM *THEIR* KIND?
Uhh. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE'S DONE A LOT OF *GOOD* F'THE COMMUNITY.
AN' HE'S KIND T' *GAFFERS* AN' *KIDDIES*
WHAT?
Oh.
HE'S *BEHIND* ME, AIN'T HE?
YOU ARE A *FOOL*, GHROL

HALK!
HAD I *BEEN* MORDATH, RATHER THAN MERELY HIS MAJORDOMO, YOU'D BE A HEAP OF *CINDERS* BY NOW, AND OUR ENTERPRISE *STILLBORN!*
IS ALL *PREPARED?*
AYE. ALL THE GUARDS LOYAL TO HIM ARE DONE AWAY WITH.
THOSE HERE NOW ARE *OURS*. HE'S ON HIS *OWN*.
GOOD. HIS *EGO* WORKS IN *OUR* FAVOR
HIS VAINGLORIOUS DESIRE TO *PREACH* TO A GATHERING OF THE CLANS ALSO ENABLES US TO RALLY THOSE *LOYAL* TO OUR CAUSE WITHOUT SUSPICION.
THE *BLOOD* AND *MIGHT* OF OUR PEOPLE HAS CONQUERED THE FIVE LANDS. I'LL BE *DAMNED* IF WE HAND THEM TO A *HUMAN!*
IT IS TROLL *LORE* THAT THE STRONGEST *PREVAIL* AND THE WEAK *FALL*
WITH MORDATH *DEAD*, THE CLANS WILL SOON MUSTER *BEHIND US* AND WE WILL *RULE* THE FIVE LANDS!
BUT HIS *POWERS?*
CAN BE COUNTERED WITH THESE *VORPAL BLADES*
DRAGON TEETH DIPPED IN *BALEFIRE* - DRAGON *VENOM*. A HEART-DEEP WOUND WILL *KILL* MORDATH AS SURELY AS THE *NEXT* MAN.
A *DEATH* FROM WHICH HE WILL *NOT* RETURN.

IT IS STRANGE
IN MY WARM DAYS I WAS CONSUMED WITH A FIERCE RAGE AT THE SLAUGHTER OF MY WIFE AND CHILD
YET NOW, I HAVE DIFFICULTY EVEN RECALLING THEIR NAMES OR PICTURING THEIR FACES
THE LONGER I WALK THIS WAKING WORLD, I REALIZE THAT I AM LESS A MAN AND MORE A CREATURE OF DRY BONES AND GRAVE MOSS
THE PASSION WITH WHICH I SOUGHT TO RENEW MY PAST GLORIES FAST DISSIPATES, LIKE THE DAWN MIST
THE GHOST OF MY FORMER LIFE HAUNTS AN EMPTY HOUSE IF THIS IS SO, THEN WHAT IS MY PURPOSE NOW?
MY LORD, CAPTAIN BOHR HAS RETURNED
BRING HIM TO ME HALK
HE IS GRAVELY INJURED I FEAR HIS TIME IS SHORT
I SEE
TAKE ME TO HIM THEN
THOUGH I CANNOT VOUCH FOR MY BEDSIDE MANNER

BOHR?

HE ISN'T *HERE*, MY LORD, BUT THERE ARE *OTHERS* WHO *CRAVE* A MOMENT OF YOUR TIME

AH, HALK, I *ALWAYS* SUSPECTED THAT YOU HAD A *TALENT* FOR *TREACHERY*

YOU SHOULD *THANK* ME REALLY I *ORCHESTRATED* THE CLANS ASSEMBLY SO THAT YOU MIGHT MAKE YOUR MOVE AND SO *EXPOSE* YOUR FELLOW *CONSPIRATORS* TO ME

YOU *FORGOT* THE *FIRST* RULE OF THE TYRANT KEEP YOUR *FRIENDS* CLOSE

BUT YOUR *ENEMIES* CLOSER

THIS CLOSE ENOUGH FOR YAH?!
GAAGHH!
FSSSSHH
WHADDYA KNOW
THEY WORK!
AAHH!
THANK
THANK YOU, HALK
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
I THANK YOU FOR RETURNING FEELINGS I'D LONG THOUGHT LOST
THE PAIN

AND THE FURY!
GET AT HIM!
HE'S JUST ONE MAN, WOUNDED AND DOWN!
HE'S EASY MEAT!
THAT'S RIGHT! COME ONE, COME ALL!
I HAVE DEATH APLENTY!
SO DO WE!
NO
YOU CANNOT KILL ME

" FOR I HAVE BECOME DEATH!"

YES...

THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE MORDATH!

ANY QUESTIONS?
WHAT'S THIS?
A DRAGONFANG
NOT YOUR TYPICAL, BRUTISH TROLL WEAPON
A VORPAL BLADE NO LESS
THIS WAS HOW THEY MANAGED TO HURT ME
I SHOULD HAVE GIVEN HALK MORE CREDIT IN THE RIGHT HANDS, THIS COULD WELL HAVE PUT ME BACK IN THE DIRT
UNFORTUNATELY FOR HIM

" HIS WERE NOT THE RIGHT HANDS "
SHIFT
DEATH TO MORDATH!
STILL WITH US, HALK? AREN'T YOU JUST FULL OF SURPRISES
THUK
GUKK
IMPECCABLE TIMING, CAPTAIN
ARE THERE ANY MORE?

I HEAR ONE OR TWO STRAGGLERS MOANING, BUT THEY'RE NO THREAT
HOWEVER, I NOTICE THAT A CERTAIN SOMEONE ISN'T WITH YOU
THE ARCHER?
WE WERE ATTACKED BY A SWARM OF RAZORMOUTHS ON THE JOURNEY BACK. THEY DECIMATED MY MEN.
IN THE CONFUSION I LOST SIGHT OF THE WOMAN.
IT'S POSSIBLE SHE ESCAPED, BUT MOST LIKELY SHE WAS DEVOURED BY A BEAST
ALONG WITH THE FRAGMENTS OF AYDEN'S ARROW, NO DOUBT?
I LOST THEM TOO, MY LORD
THIS IS THE SECOND TIME YOU FAILED ME, BOHR AND FOR A SECOND TIME, I WILL SPARE YOU
I OWE YOU WHAT PASSES FOR MY LIFE, BUT DISAPPOINT ME AGAIN AND I WILL TURN YOUR BONES TO CHARCOAL. UNDERSTOOD?
YES, LORD
AND THE WOMAN...?

CAN WAIT IT APPEARS I HAVE OTHER CONCERNS
HALK WAS NOT ACTING ALONE SOMEONE FURNISHED HIM WITH ENCHANTED WEAPONS
"...SOMEONE WHO KNEW WHAT IT WOULD TAKE TO KILL ME
"FOR ALL HIS POSTURING, HALK WAS MERELY A PAWN WHAT I WISH TO KNOW IS
"...WHO IS THE PLAYER?"
YOU LOST, MY LORD PALLIAS
MORDATH PREVAILED
AS YOU KNEW HE WOULD, MY DEAREST DODONA
THIS IS BUT ONE GAME THERE WILL BE MANY OTHERS I SIMPLY WISHED TO TEST HIS RESOLVE
IT'S CLEAR HE'S NOT THE DREARY, BROODING WRAITH HE IMAGINES HIMSELF TO BE
THERE'S LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

HOWEVER, HE IS A *FOOL* TO THINK HE *ALONE* HAS DESIGNS ON THE FIVE LANDS
THE WORLD *CHANGED* IN THE THREE CENTURIES HE WAS *ENTOMBED* *NEW* POWERS ARE AT PLAY NOW
I W SHED TO SEE IF HE COULD BE *HURT*
AND HE CAN
HE IS POWERFUL BUT *NOT* NVULNERABLE
WHICH MEANS HE CAN BE *KILLED*
KRAKK
T S SIMPLY A MATTER OF CHOOSING THE *RIGHT TOOLS* FOR THE JOB
CARE FOR *ANOTHER* GAME?

THE GAUNTLET HAS BEEN THROWN DOWN
THIS ATTEMPT ON MY LIFE HELD NO REAL THREAT, AS ITS ARCHITECT WELL KNEW
IT WAS MERELY A DEMONSTRATION THAT EVEN HERE, IN THIS HEART OF DARKNESS, I AM VULNERABLE
GOOD
I HAVE LONG FELT THE DESIRES OF MY WARM LIFE ATROPHYING WITHIN ME MY SENSE OF PURPOSE WANING
THE TASK IS DONE THE FIVE LANDS ARE ALL BUT MINE NOW IT IS TIME FOR THIS MORDATH, THE UNDEAD MORDATH, TO BE FULFILLED

BEGINNING WITH MY REVENGE!

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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Cassidy

Mordath

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Ayden retreated to the solitude from which he'd come, but broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them to Quin's Five Lands, promising to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb and again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn took up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments. Armed with Ayden's bow and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and her dog Kreeg, Arwyn dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

Having found the first two Fragments, Arwyn, was in pursuit of the third when she was betrayed by the Urnethi, the mysterious dwellers of the desert Wastes. A prisoner of Mordath's trolls and their leader Bohr, she was being escorted back to Mordath's fortress when the group was attacked and slaughtered by a pack of wasteland beasts. Only by aiding one another did Arwyn and Bohr survive the battle before going their separate ways.

Arwyn is now in furious pursuit of Gareth, Cassidy and the three Fragments, while Bohr has discovered Mordath single-handedly quelling an abortive troll coup. Meanwhile, the mysterious mage Pallias is working behind the scenes, contesting Mordath's grip on the Five Lands.

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IT'S *THEM*, CASS THEY CAME *THIS* WAY
HOW CAN YOU BE SURE?
I CAN'T FOR *CERTAIN*, BUT TROLLS AREN'T EXACTLY *LIGHTWEIGHTS* THEIR MOUNTS LEAVE A *DEEPER* IMPRESSION THAN ONE WITH A *HUMAN* RIDER
LIKE THIS ONE *HERE*
WUFF
DON'T WORRY, KREEG, WE'LL FIND HER
Uhh, GARETH

I'D SAY SHE'S FOUND US.

NO SUDDEN MOVES!

YOU WOULDN'T WANT ME TO SLIP NOW, WOULD YOU?

ARWYN!

PLEASE, PUT THE SWORD DOWN!

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK

SO WHAT AM I THINKING, GARETH?

YOUR OLD FLAME TURNS ME AND THE FRAGMENTS OVER TO BOHR THEN LO AND BEHOLD SHE PA..MS THEM BACK, YOU'RE MIRACULOUSLY FREE .

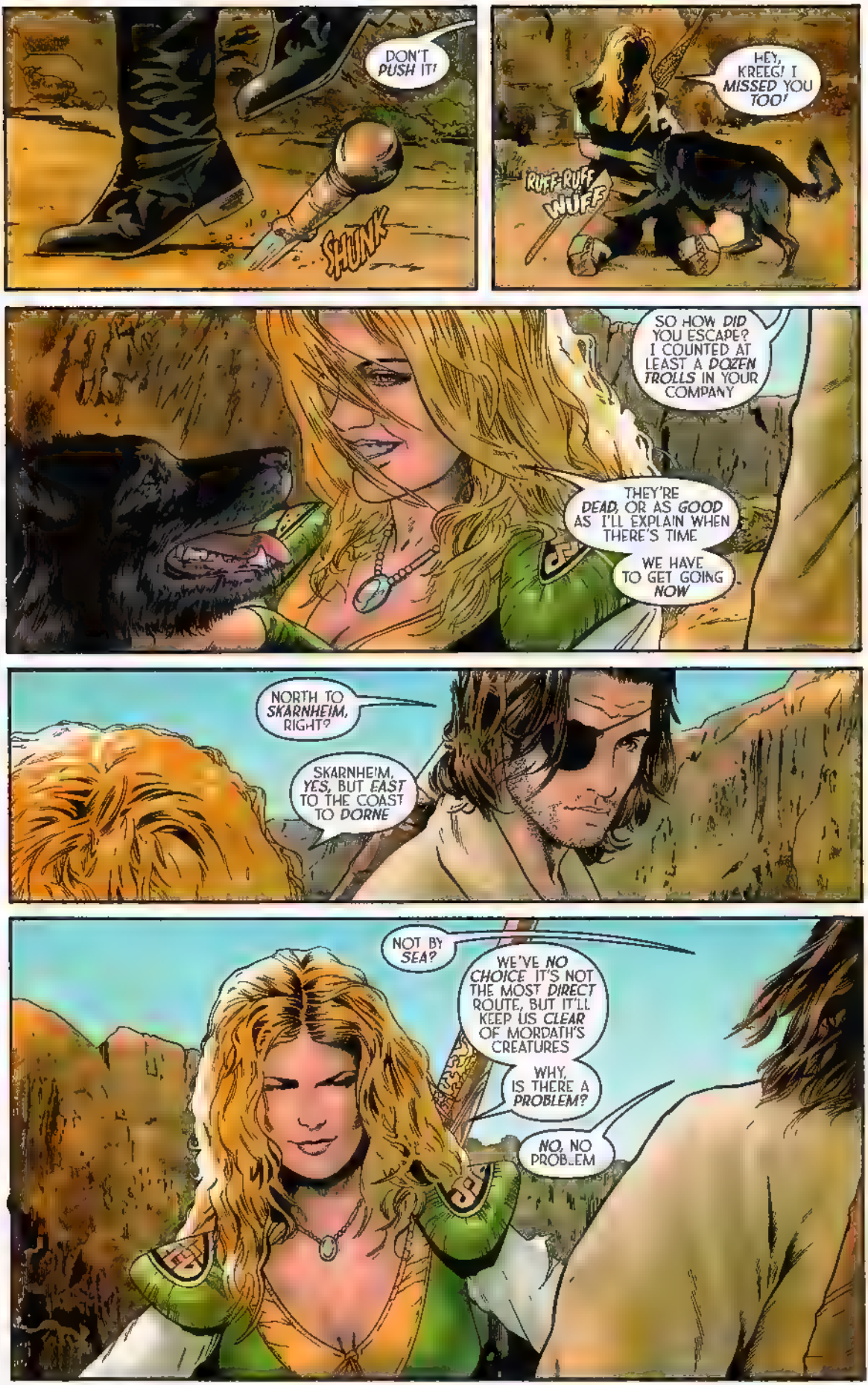
AND THE PAIR OF YOU ARE PLAYING HAPPY FAMILIES ONCE AGAIN?

HOW STUPID DO YOU THINK I AM?

WELL

IT WAS A RHETORICAL QUESTION!

LOOK, WE WERE RUNNING OUT OF OPTIONS NONE OF US STOOD A CHANCE IF WE WERE ALL CAPTURED I HAD TO THINK ON MY FEET
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE THE SNEAKY, UNTRUSTWORTHY THIEF, SO I PLAYED UP TO THEIR EXPECTATIONS AND IT WORKED!
HERE
YOUR PRECIOUS FRAGMENTS OF AYDEN'S ARROW
TAKE THEM, THEY'RE MORE TROUBLE THAN THEY'RE WORTH
SHE'S TELLING THE TRUTH HONEST
WOULD WE BE OUT HERE LOOKING FOR YOU OTHERWISE?
GO
PARANOID MUCH?

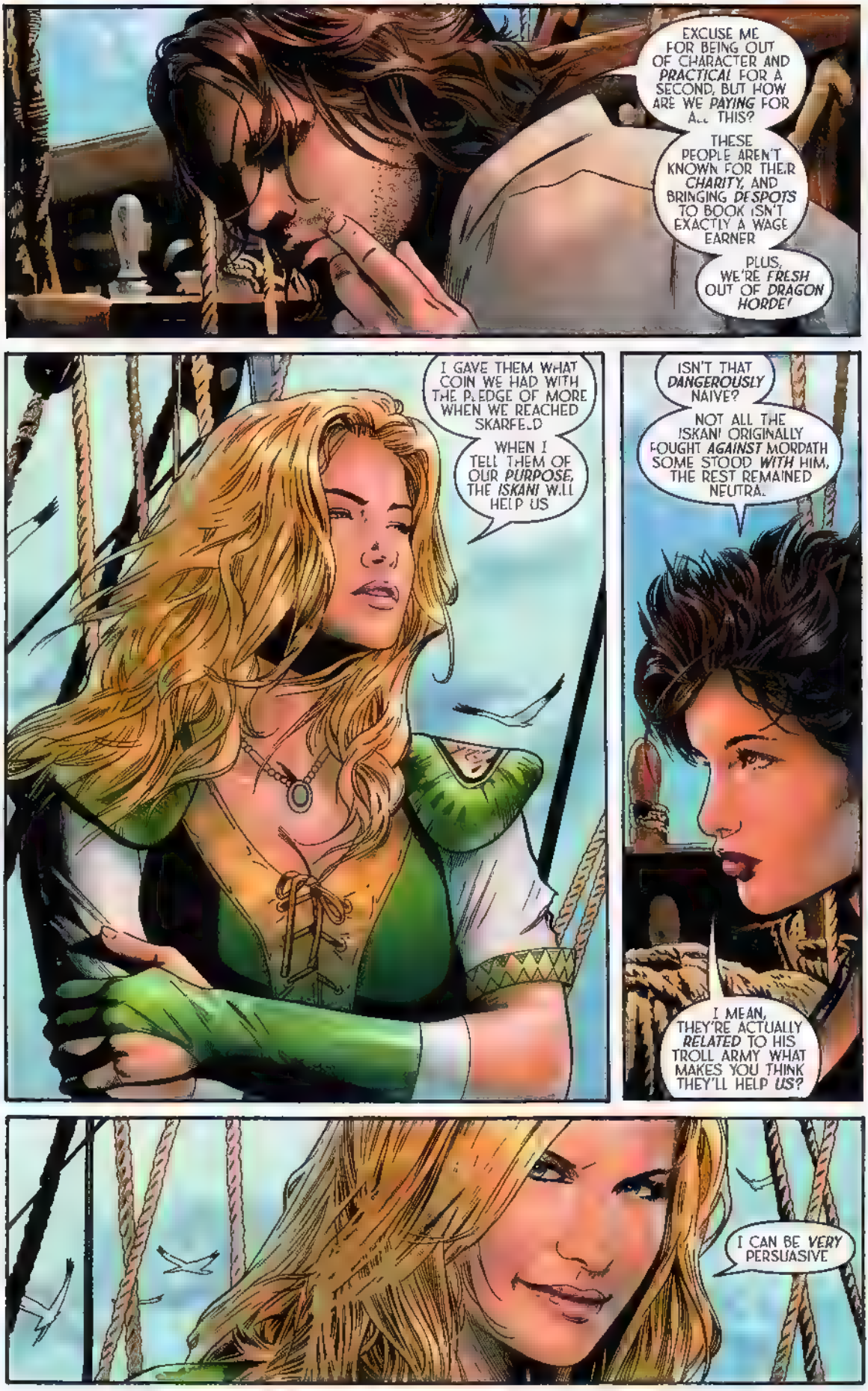

DON'T PUSH IT!
SHUNK
HEY, KREEG! I MISSED YOU TOO!
RUFF-RUFF WUFF
SO HOW DID YOU ESCAPE? I COUNTED AT LEAST A DOZEN TROLLS IN YOUR COMPANY
THEY'RE DEAD, OR AS GOOD AS I'LL EXPLAIN WHEN THERE'S TIME
WE HAVE TO GET GOING NOW
NORTH TO SKARNHEIM, RIGHT?
SKARNHEIM, YES, BUT EAST TO THE COAST TO DORNE
NOT BY SEA?
WE'VE NO CHOICE IT'S NOT THE MOST DIRECT ROUTE, BUT IT'LL KEEP US CLEAR OF MORDATH'S CREATURES
WHY, IS THERE A PROBLEM?
NO, NO PROBLEM

" I LOVE THE OCEAN!"
I DON'T KNOW WHO HE WAS WORKING FOR, I SWEAR!
HE CAME TO US WITH THE PLAN, TOLD US TO BE READY! THAT WAS ALL!
RHUK, YOU LYING SCUM! YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE YOU?
YOU BETRAYED OUR LORD, BETRAYED HIS TRUST!
ASSASSIN!
I I WAS WRONG PLEASE, FORGIVE ME, I BEG YOU, CAPTAIN BOHR
I WILL SERVE I WILL BE LOYAL
A TROLL, BEGGING FORGIVENESS! NOW YOU SHAME ME!
YOUR TRAITOROUS COMRADES ARE ASH AND BONE FATE SPARED YOU FOR ONE REASON ONLY
TO NAME THE TRUE FIEND BEHIND THIS CONSPIRACY!
SPEAK! REDEEM WHAT LITTLE HONOR YOU HAVE LEFT!
I DON'T KNOW! TRULY! THE ONLY ONES WHO MIGHT WERE THOSE HALK GAVE THE DAGGERS TO!
AND NOW THEY ARE DEAD HOW CONVENIENT.
UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU

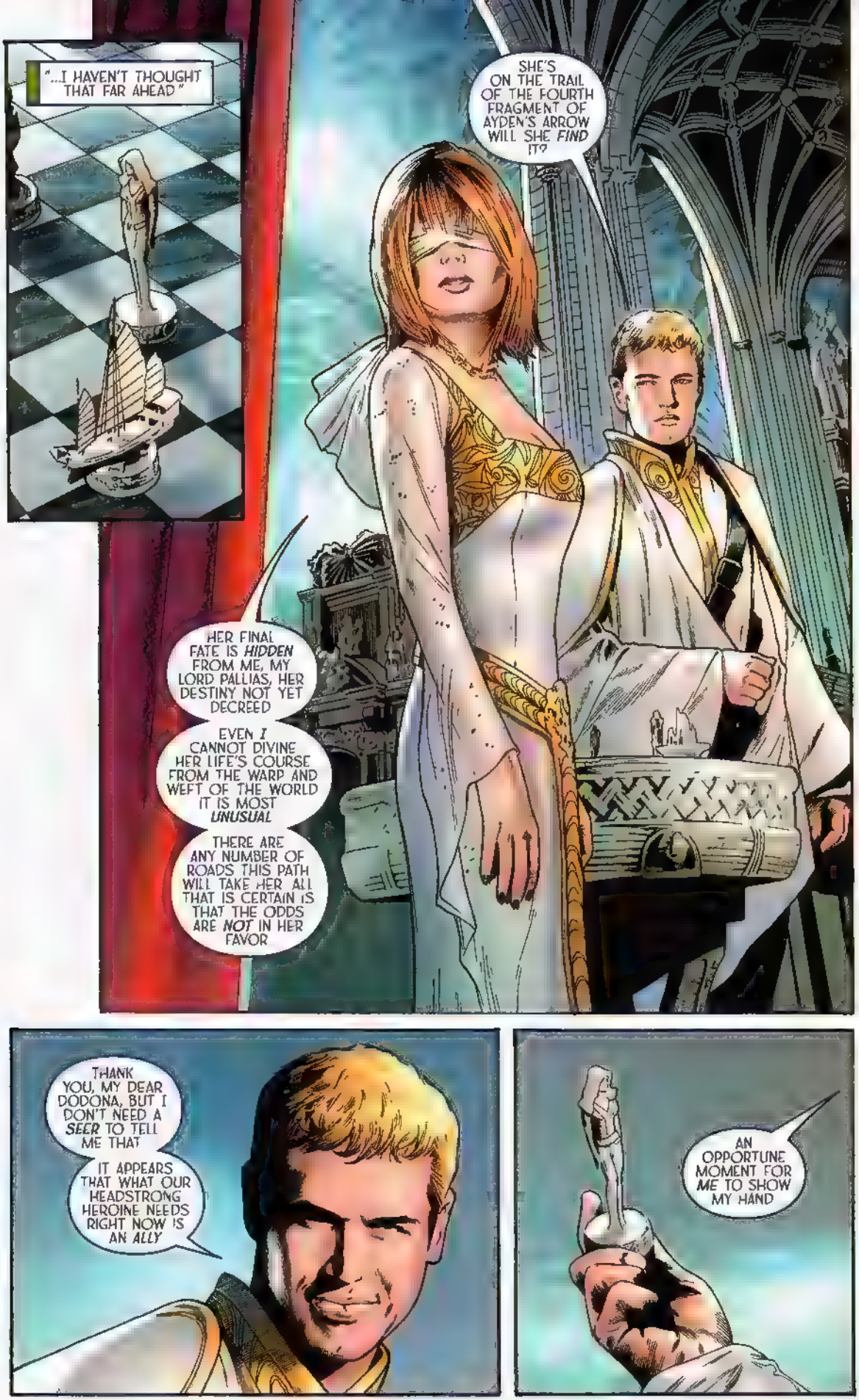
THIS IS ONE OF THE DAGGERS THEY SOUGHT TO USE A VORPAL BLADE
NOT ACTUALLY A DAGGER, BUT RATHER A DRAGON FANG DIPPED IN BALEFIRE
A DEEP ENOUGH WOUND COULD HAVE MEANT CERTAIN DEATH EVEN FOR A REVENANT SUCH AS MYSELF
AS YOU CAN APPRECIATE, DRAGON FANGS ARE NOT EASILY COME BY FIVE MORE SO
HALK DID NOT HAVE THE WIT OR THE GUILE TO ACQUIRE THEM ALONE HE WAS A PLAYING PIECE, A PAWN IN SOMEONE'S GREATER GAME
THE QUESTION IS, WHO IS THAT SOMEONE?
PLEASE, LORD MORDATH. I DON'T KNOW
I KNOW YOU DON'T
EUARRGH
FSSSSHH

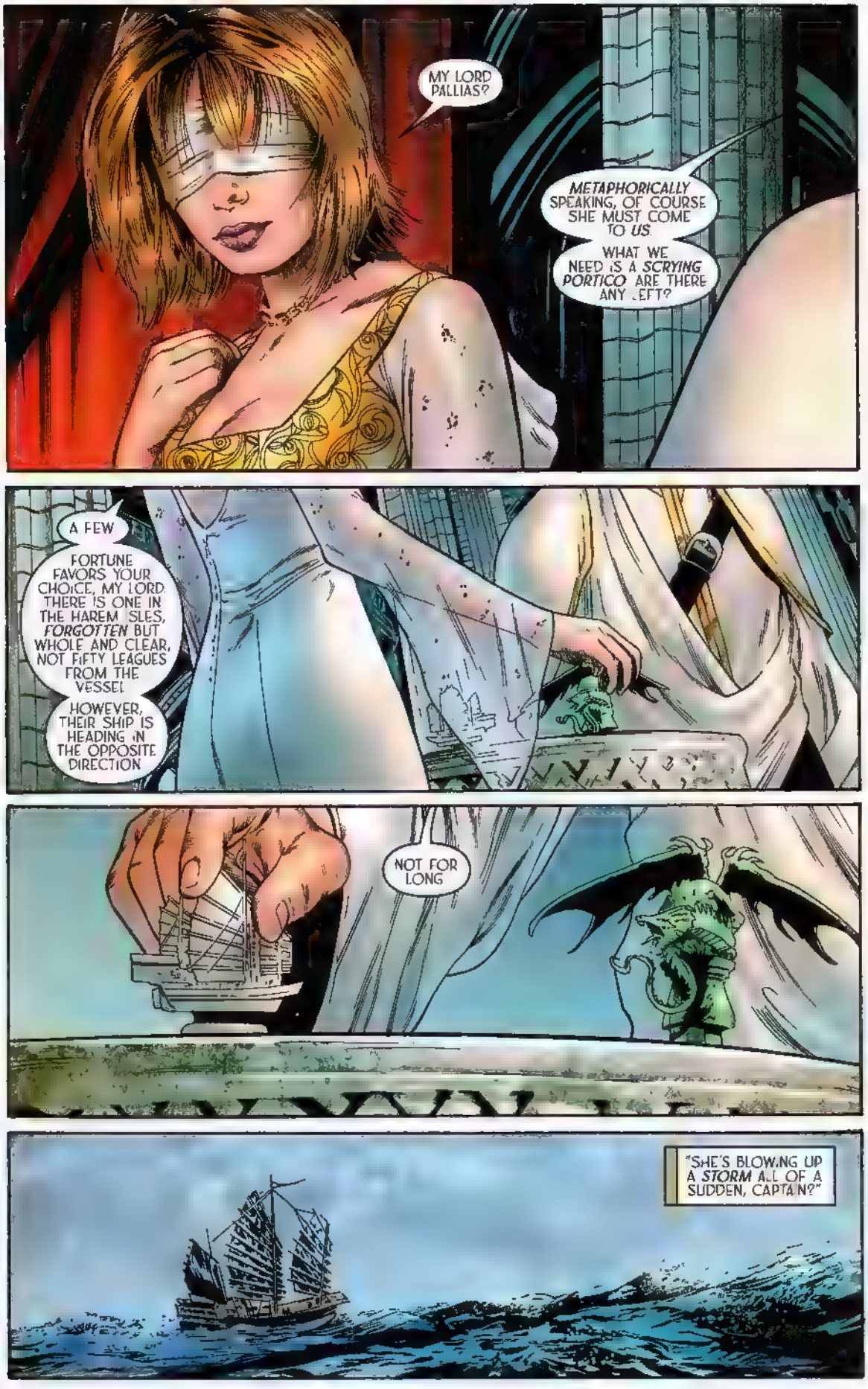
IT SEEMS WE MUST LOOK FOR ANSWERS ELSEWHERE
THIS IS HALK'S CHAMBER? YOU SEARCHED IT THOROUGHLY?
YES, LORD
INTERESTING
THIS IS EXQUISITE THIRD KINGDOM, I BELIEVE FIVE THOUSAND YEARS BEFORE MY WARM LIFE BEGAN
HOW DID HE COME BY SUCH A DELICATE THING?
I CANNOT SAY HE RARELY LEFT THE KEEP UNACCOMPANIED
HE COULDN'T HAVE MET WITH ANYONE WITHOUT BEING NOTICED
INDEED
THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN
SKKTAK

HUARRGH!
KILL ME NOW PLEASE
SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE, eh, SWEETIE? YOU ALWAYS WERE LOUSY AT SEA TRAVEL
SORRY
I WOULDN'T MIND
" BUT WE'RE STILL IN THE HARBOR "
WE'RE ALL SET THEY'VE AGREED TO TAKE US AS FAR AS THE INLET AT SKARFELD
WE CAN FOLLOW THE RIVER THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS TO SKARNHEIM ON OUR OWN


EXCUSE ME FOR BEING OUT OF CHARACTER AND *PRACTICAL* FOR A SECOND, BUT HOW ARE WE *PAYING* FOR A... THIS?
THESE PEOPLE AREN'T KNOWN FOR THEIR *CHARITY*, AND BRINGING *DESPOTS* TO BOOK ISN'T EXACTLY A WAGE EARNER
PLUS, WE'RE *FRESH* OUT OF *DRAGON HORDE!*
I GAVE THEM WHAT COIN WE HAD WITH THE PLEDGE OF MORE WHEN WE REACHED SKARFELD
WHEN I TELL THEM OF OUR *PURPOSE*, THE *ISKANI* WILL HELP US
ISN'T THAT *DANGEROUSLY* NAIVE?
NOT ALL THE ISKANI ORIGINALLY FOUGHT *AGAINST* MORDATH SOME STOOD *WITH* HIM, THE REST REMAINED NEUTRAL.
I MEAN, THEY'RE ACTUALLY *RELATED* TO HIS TROLL ARMY WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THEY'LL HELP *US*?
I CAN BE *VERY* PERSUASIVE

ALL HANDS, MAKE READY TO SAIL!
THE QUEST'S MORE THAN HALFWAY *DONE*, GARETH
TWO MORE FRAGMENTS AND AYDEN RETURNS. TWO MORE FRAGMENTS AND MORDATH FINALLY SUFFERS THE *FATE* HE DESERVES
I LIKE HOW AYDEN GETS *US* TO DO A... THE DIRTY WORK AND WE DON'T SEE A *BRASS FARTHING* OUT OF IT. A *HOT MEAL* ONCE IN A WHILE WOULD BE NICE
I MEAN, WHAT'S *IN IT* FOR US?
VENGEANCE
TELL ME, ARWYN, WHAT HAPPENS AFTER MORDATH'S *DEAD?*
WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH YOUR LIFE *AFTERWARDS?*
I DON'T KNOW


"...I HAVEN'T THOUGHT THAT FAR AHEAD"
SHE'S ON THE TRAIL OF THE FOURTH FRAGMENT OF AYDEN'S ARROW WILL SHE *FIND* IT?
HER FINAL FATE IS *HIDDEN* FROM ME, MY LORD PALLIAS, HER DESTINY NOT YET DECREED
EVEN *I* CANNOT DIVINE HER LIFE'S COURSE FROM THE WARP AND WEFT OF THE WORLD IT IS MOST *UNUSUAL*
THERE ARE ANY NUMBER OF ROADS THIS PATH WILL TAKE HER ALL THAT IS CERTAIN IS THAT THE ODDS ARE *NOT* IN HER FAVOR
THANK YOU, MY DEAR DODONA, BUT I DON'T NEED A *SEER* TO TELL ME THAT
IT APPEARS THAT WHAT OUR HEADSTRONG HEROINE NEEDS RIGHT NOW IS AN *ALLY*
AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT FOR *ME* TO SHOW MY HAND

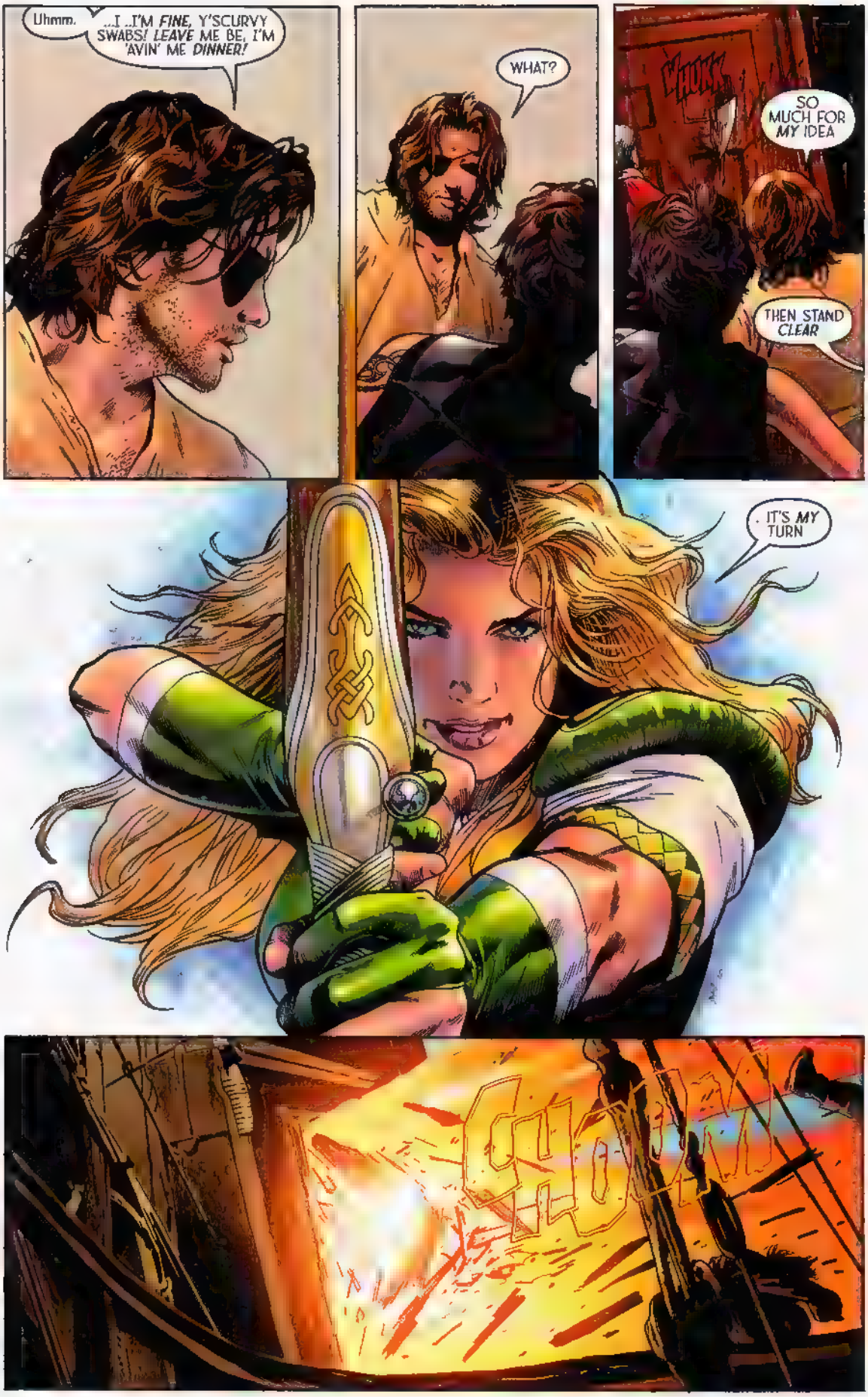

MY LORD PALLIAS?
METAPHORICALLY SPEAKING, OF COURSE SHE MUST COME TO *US*.
WHAT WE NEED IS A *SCRYING PORTICO* ARE THERE ANY LEFT?
A FEW
FORTUNE FAVORS YOUR CHOICE, MY LORD. THERE IS ONE IN THE HAREM ISLES, *FORGOTTEN* BUT WHOLE AND CLEAR, NOT FIFTY LEAGUES FROM THE VESSEL
HOWEVER, THEIR SHIP IS HEADING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION
NOT FOR LONG
"SHE'S BLOWING UP A *STORM* ALL OF A SUDDEN, CAPTAIN?"

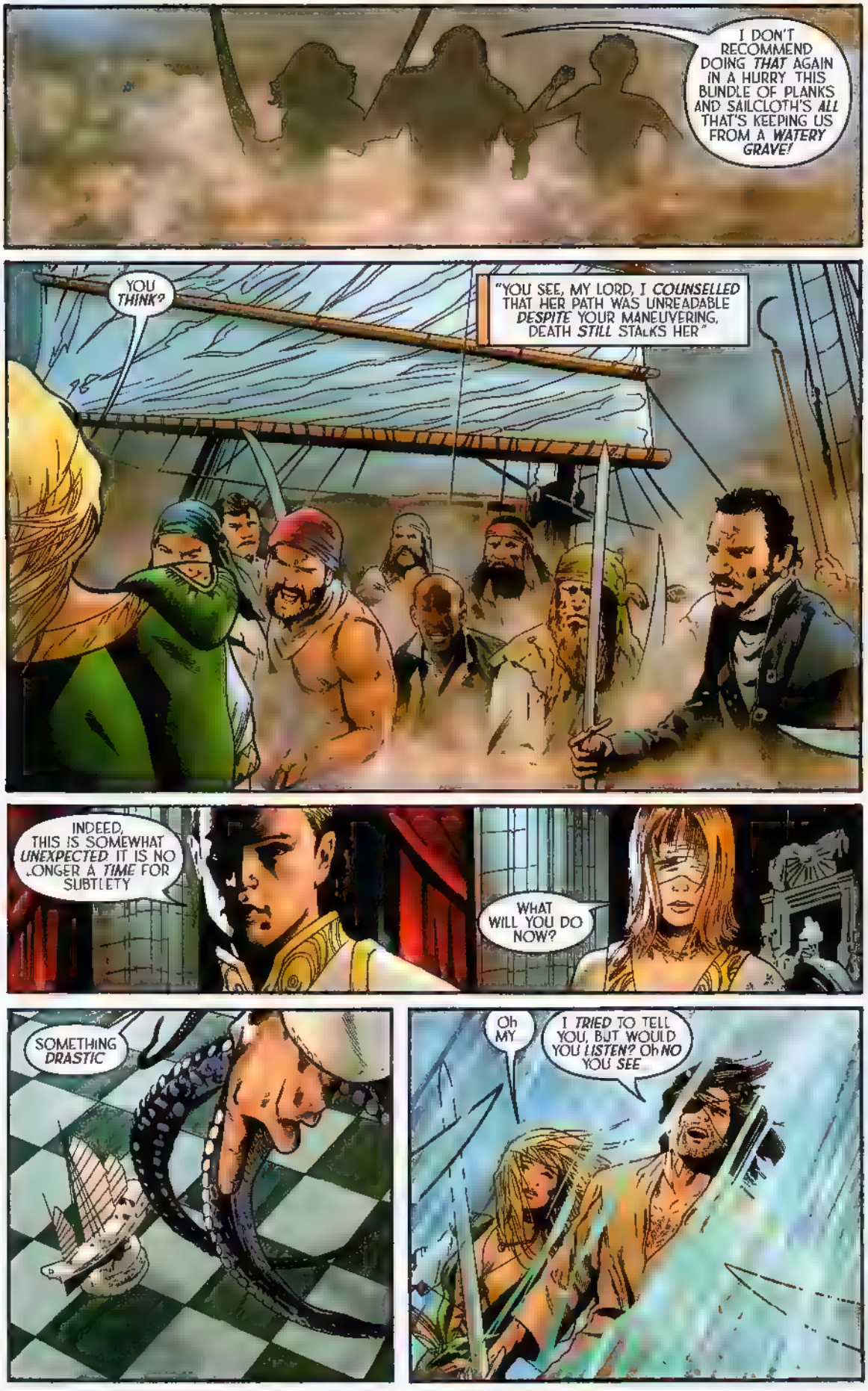
AYE, THE SEA'S A FICKLE MISTRESS. THERE'S NAUGHT TO DO BUT BATTEN DOWN, TACK INTO TH' WIND AN' RIDE IT OUT
WE'LL LOSE SOME TIME, BUT I FIND IT'S BETTER TO ROLL WI' THE PUNCHES THAN MAKE A FIGHT OF IT.
Uhhn
STILL NOT GOT YOUR *SEA LEGS*, eh?
IT'S NOT MY *LEGS* THAT BOTHER ME
HERE SON, TAKE A SWIG O' THIS. IT'S AN OLD *SAILOR'S TONIC* IT'LL SETTLE YOUR BELLY RIGHT UP
THANKS
SO, CAPTAIN RACAL, WHAT *TAKES* YOU TO SKARFE..D? IT'S NOT ON THE *USUAL* TRADE ROUTES
NEEDS MUST, WHAT WITH THE UNREST AN' ALL. BUSINESS IS SCARCE, WE MAKE COIN WHERE WE CAN

RECENTLY THOUGH, I'VE DECIDED TO EXPAND INTO AN' EMERGIN' MARKET
WHAT'S THAT?
SLAVES
GGGKKK!
GARETH!
THUNK
POISONED!
YOU MURDERING SCUM!

An ah, CAREFUL WE DON'T WANT ANY DAMAGED GOODS
A PRETTY PAIR LIKE YOU ARE WORTH A TIDY SUM WHERE WE'RE HEADING THO' I'M AFRAID IT WON'T BE SKARFE.D
DUMP THAT OVERBOARD HER MUTT'S IN HER CABIN GIVE IT TO COOKIE I FANCY A NICE POT ROAST
AHK
THOKK
UHK!
CHUDD

HELP!
ALARM!
KA-THUNK
GLKK
SO YOU *WERE* FAKING?
I *KNEW* IT WAS POISON I'VE SMELLED *BLACK NARCISSUS* BEFORE
I FIGURED IT WAS BEST TO TAKE A LEAF OUT OF *YOUR* BOOK AND *PLAY ALONG*
CAPT'N!
CAPT'N, ARE YA ALRIGHT?
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE *COMPANY!*


Uhmm.
...I ..I'M FINE, Y'SCURVY SWABS! LEAVE ME BE, I'M 'AVIN' ME DINNER!
WHAT?
SO MUCH FOR MY IDEA
THEN STAND CLEAR
. IT'S MY TURN
CRASH


I DON'T RECOMMEND DOING *THAT* AGAIN IN A HURRY THIS BUNDLE OF PLANKS AND SAILCLOTH'S *ALL* THAT'S KEEPING US FROM A *WATERY GRAVE!*
YOU *THINK?*
"YOU SEE, MY LORD, I *COUNSELLED* THAT HER PATH WAS UNREADABLE *DESPITE* YOUR MANEUVERING, DEATH *STILL* STALKS HER"
INDEED, THIS IS SOMEWHAT *UNEXPECTED*. IT IS NO LONGER A *TIME* FOR SUBTLETY
WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW?
SOMETHING *DRASTIC*
Oh MY
I *TRIED* TO TELL YOU, BUT WOULD YOU *LISTEN?* Oh *NO* YOU *SEE*

"...THIS IS WHY I HATE SEA TRAVEL!"

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Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

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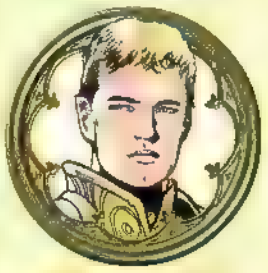
Cassidy



Pallias

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Before retreating to the solitude from which he'd come, Ayden broke the fatal arrow into Five fragments, scattering them to Quin's Five Lands and vowing to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb and again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn took up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments. Armed with Ayden's bow and accompanied by her dog Kreeg, the adventurer Gareth and the thief Cassidy, Arwyn dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

In possession of three Fragments, Arwyn, along with Gareth and Cassidy, set out by ship for Skarnhime in the north. However, their ship was destroyed by a huge beast up from the depths. Meanwhile, the mysterious mage Pallias is working behind the scenes, covertly contesting Mordath's grip on the Five Lands.

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WOOSH

KREEEEG!

KREEG!

HERE, BOY!

ANY LUCK?

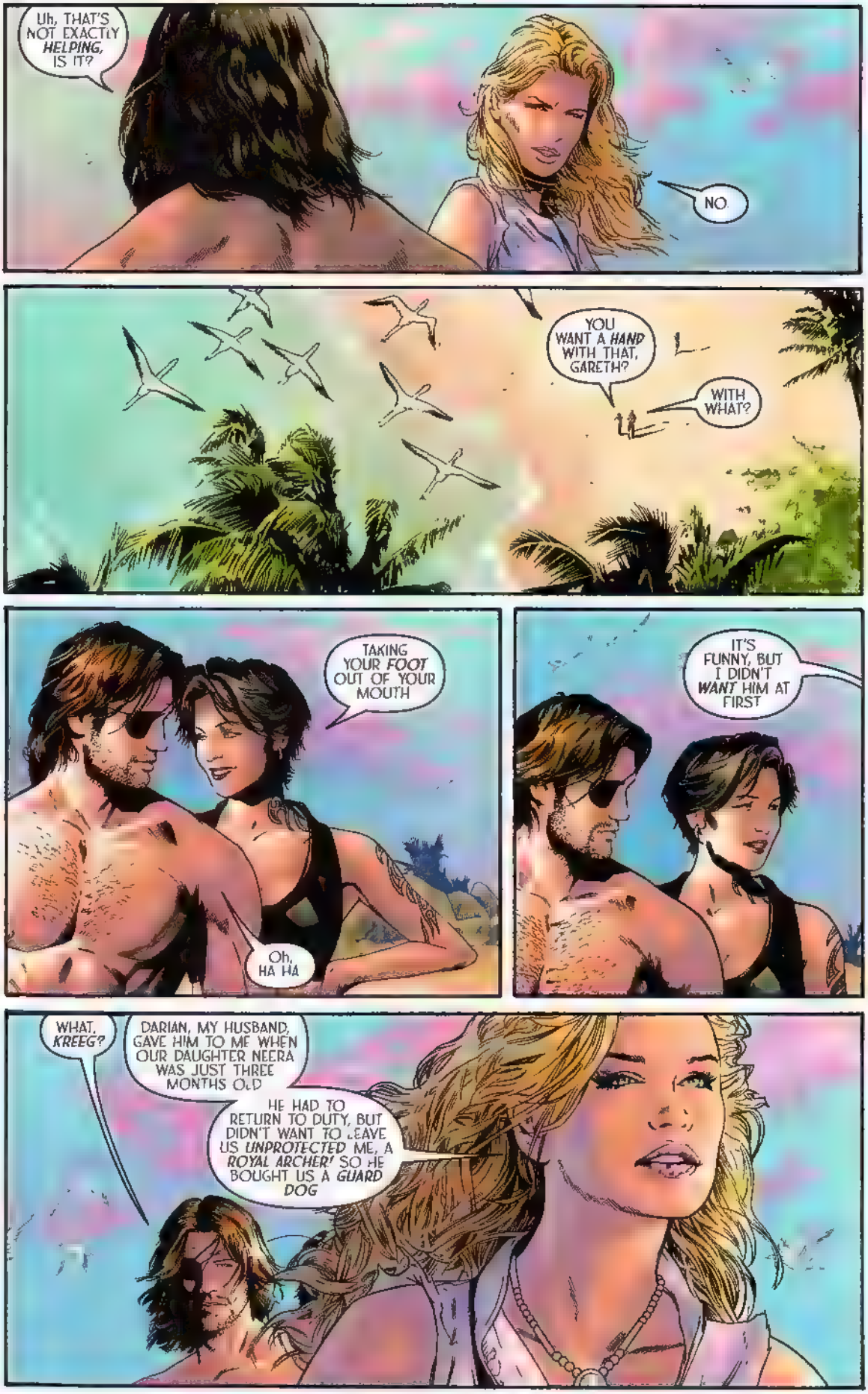
NO

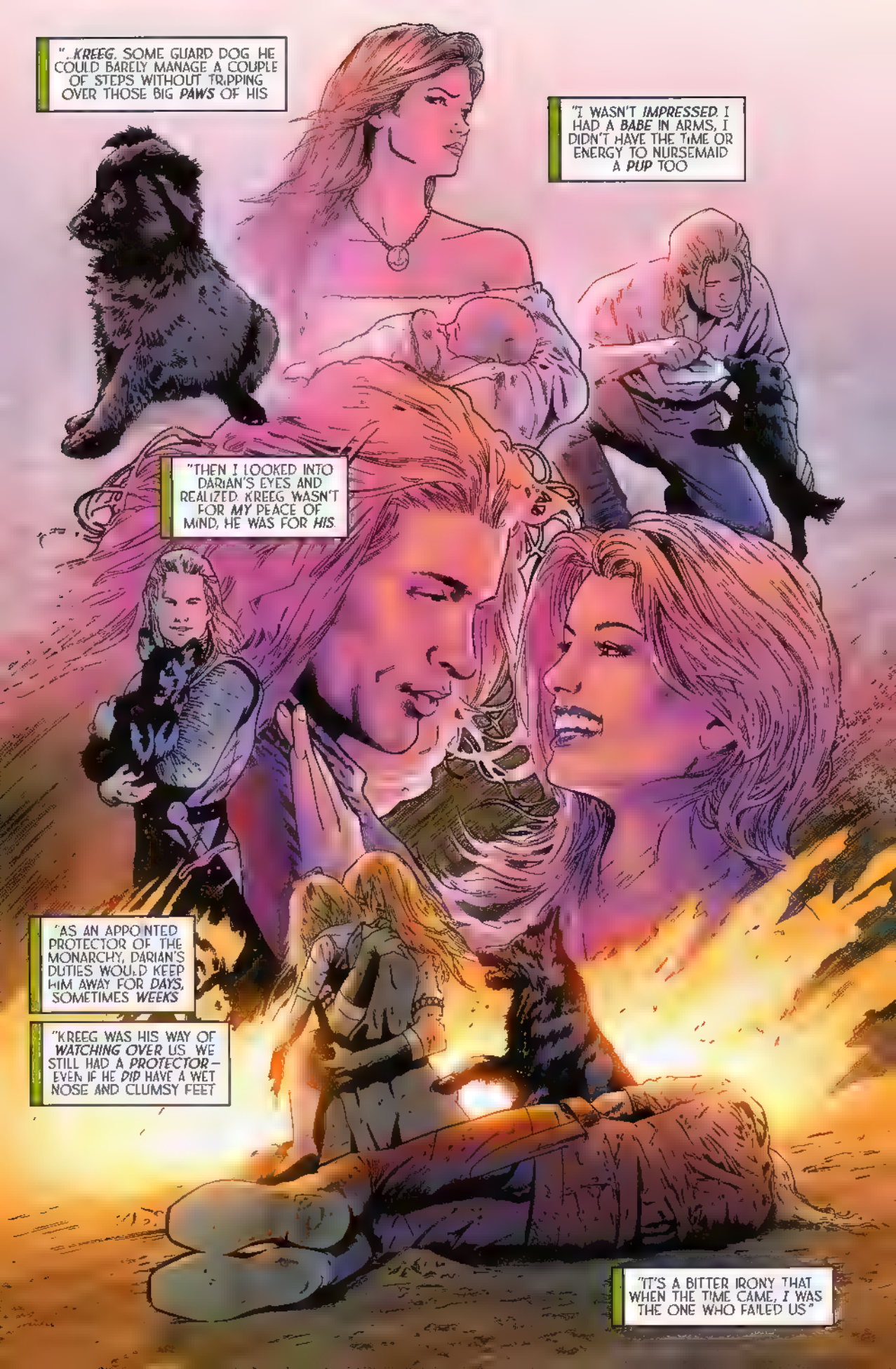
I HAVE TO FACE IT, HE'S *GONE*

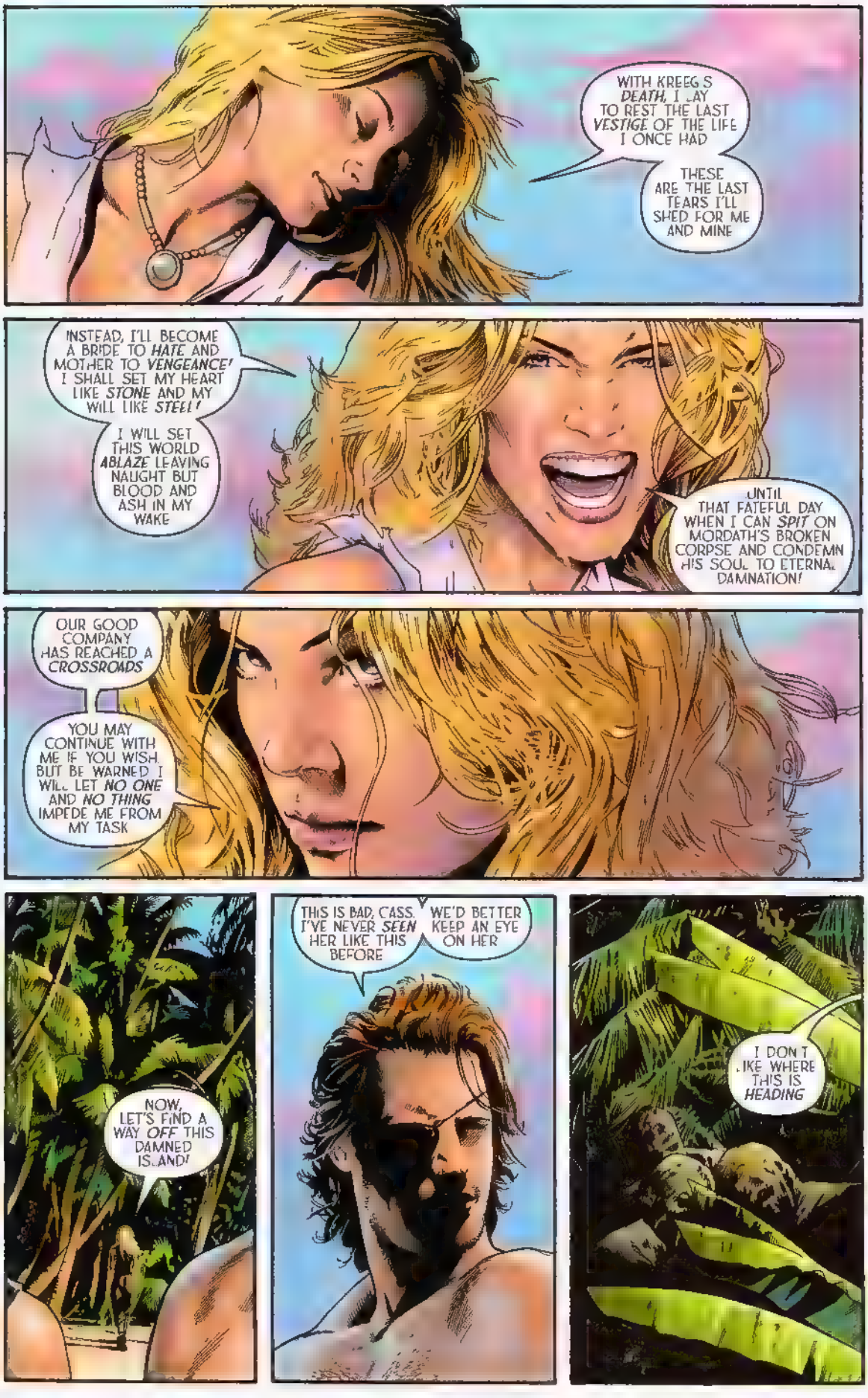
HE'S *DEAD*

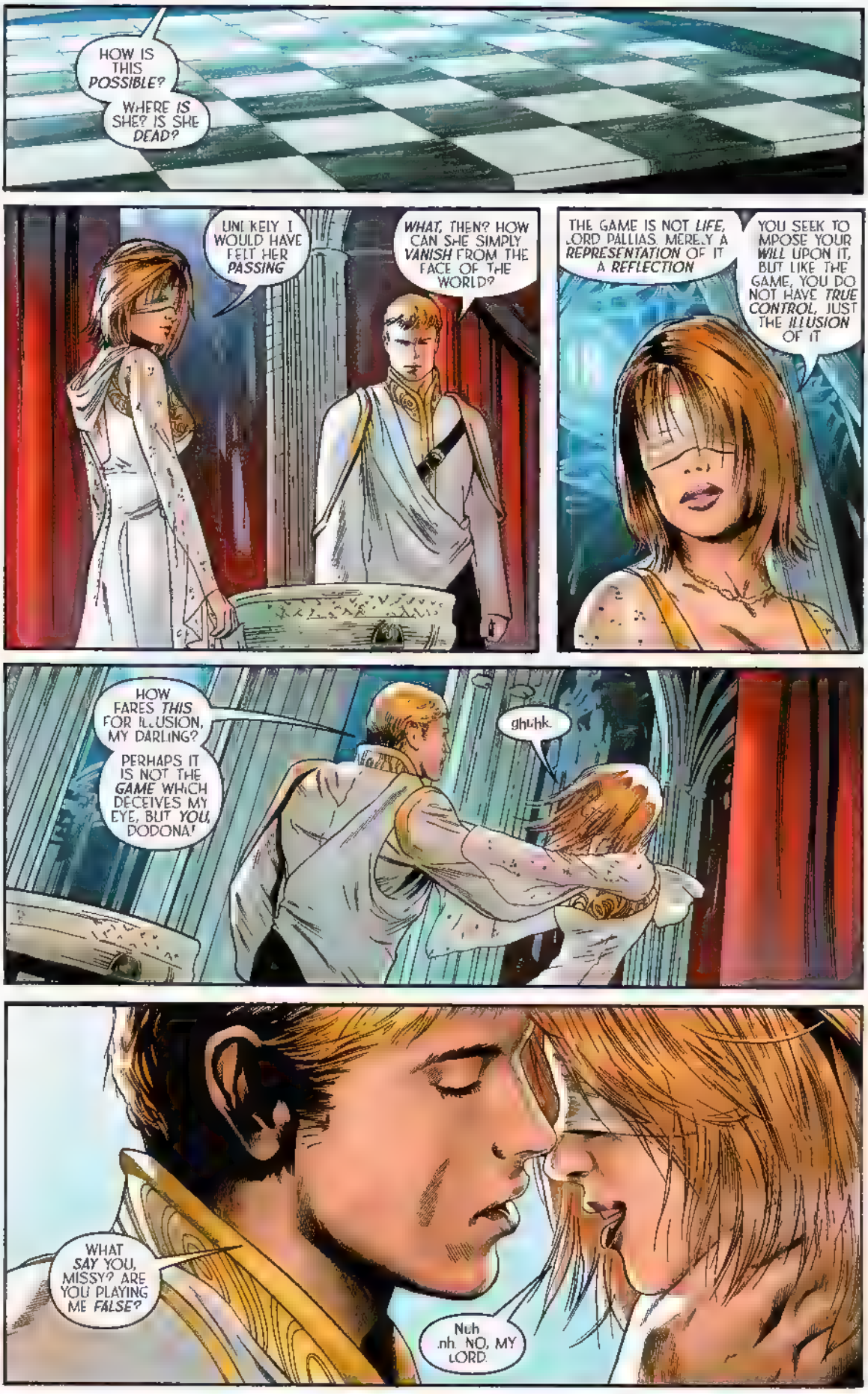
DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT, ARWYN! THAT POOCH IS TOUGH AS OLD BOOTS.

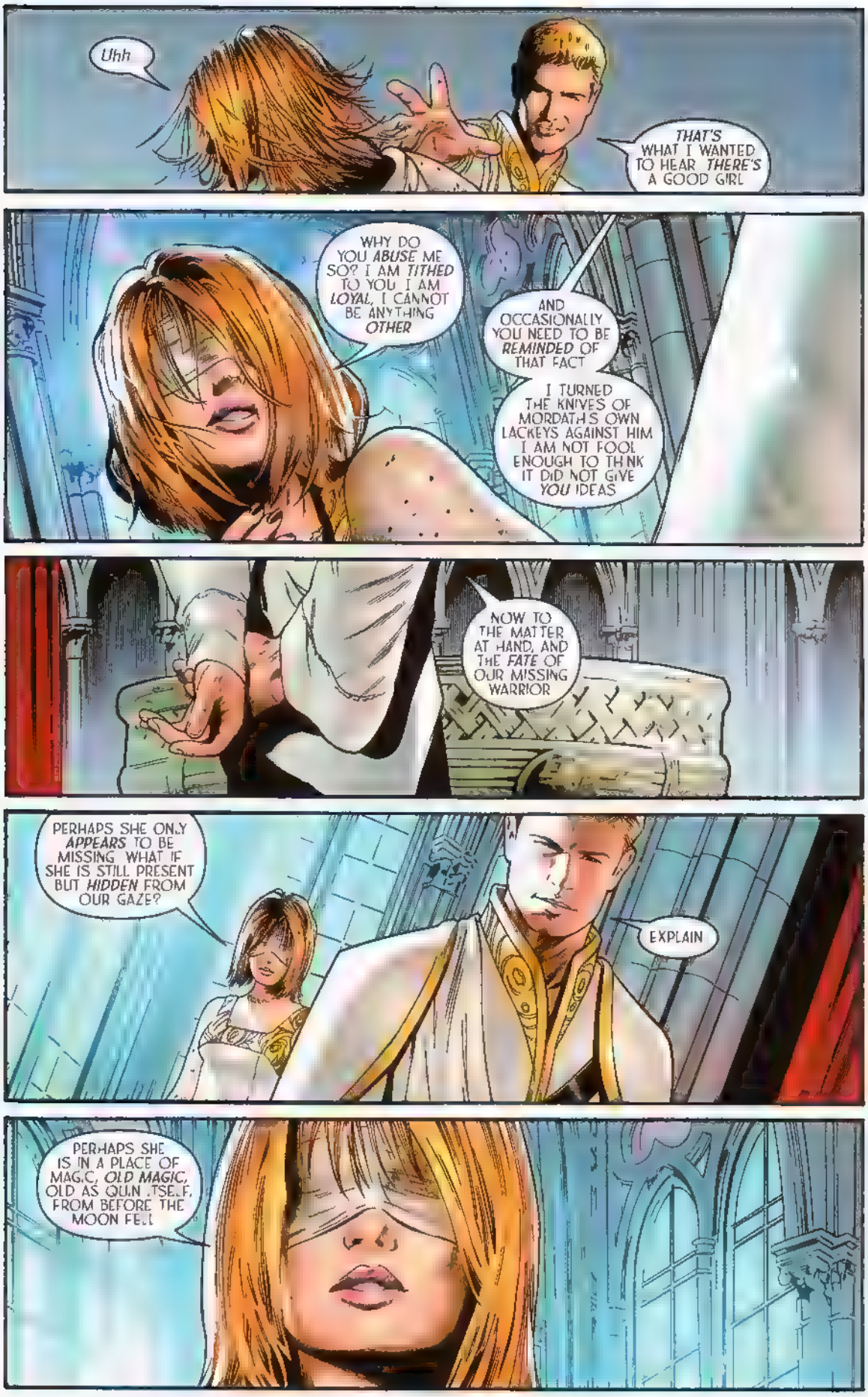
BACK IN OUDUBAI, HE GOT BOUNCED OFF A WALL AND *KNOCKED COLD* SAVING ME FROM A GIANT, FLESH-EATING URNETHI BUG

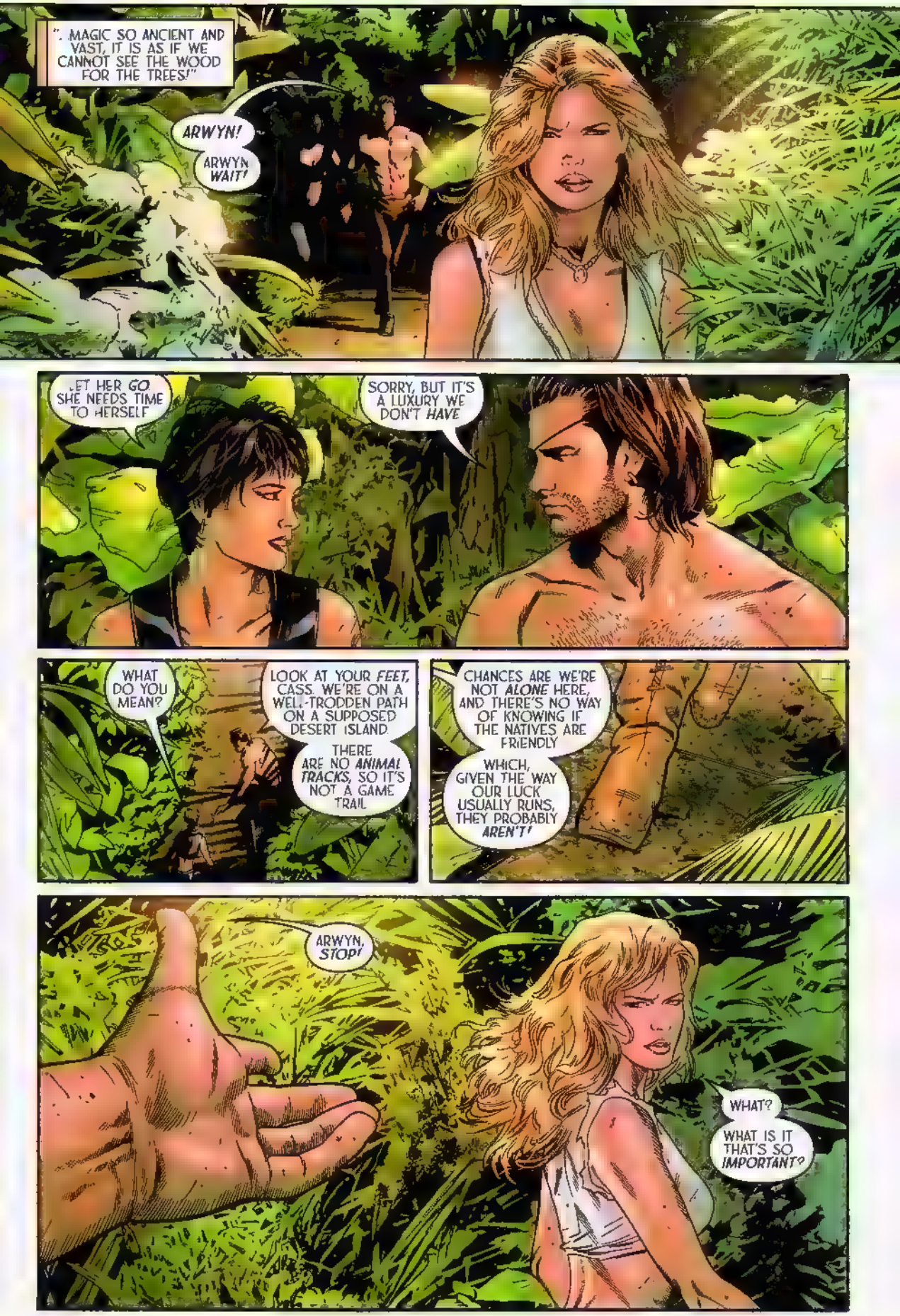

Uh, THAT'S NOT EXACTLY *HELPING*, IS IT?
NO
YOU WANT A *HAND* WITH THAT, GARETH?
WITH WHAT?
TAKING YOUR *FOOT* OUT OF YOUR MOUTH
Oh, HA HA
IT'S FUNNY, BUT I DIDN'T *WANT* HIM AT FIRST
WHAT, *KREEG*?
DARIAN, MY HUSBAND, GAVE HIM TO ME WHEN OUR DAUGHTER NEERA WAS JUST THREE MONTHS OLD
HE HAD TO RETURN TO DUTY, BUT DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE US *UNPROTECTED* ME, A *ROYAL ARCHER!* SO HE BOUGHT US A *GUARD DOG*

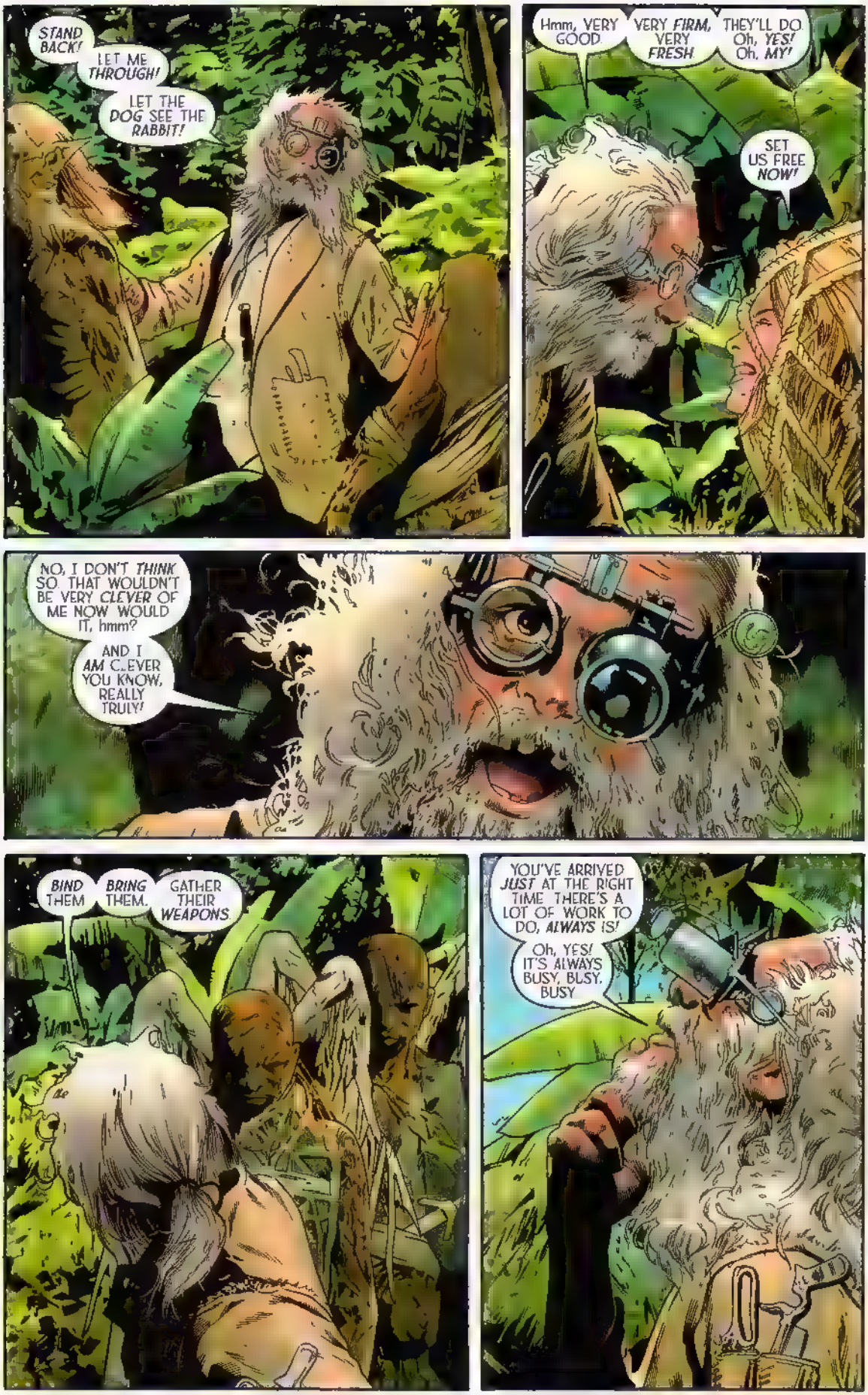

"...KREEG. SOME GUARD DOG HE COULD BARELY MANAGE A COUPLE OF STEPS WITHOUT TRIPPING OVER THOSE BIG PAWS OF HIS
"I WASN'T IMPRESSED. I HAD A BABE IN ARMS, I DIDN'T HAVE THE TIME OR ENERGY TO NURSEMAID A PUP TOO
"THEN I LOOKED INTO DARIAN'S EYES AND REALIZED KREEG WASN'T FOR MY PEACE OF MIND, HE WAS FOR HIS.
"AS AN APPOINTED PROTECTOR OF THE MONARCHY, DARIAN'S DUTIES WOULD KEEP HIM AWAY FOR DAYS, SOMETIMES WEEKS
"KREEG WAS HIS WAY OF WATCHING OVER US. WE STILL HAD A PROTECTOR— EVEN IF HE DID HAVE A WET NOSE AND CLUMSY FEET
"IT'S A BITTER IRONY THAT WHEN THE TIME CAME, I WAS THE ONE WHO FAILED US"


WITH KREEG'S *DEATH*, I LAY TO REST THE LAST *VESTIGE* OF THE LIFE I ONCE HAD
THESE ARE THE LAST TEARS I'LL SHED FOR ME AND MINE
INSTEAD, I'LL BECOME A BRIDE TO *HATE* AND MOTHER TO *VENGEANCE*! I SHALL SET MY HEART LIKE *STONE* AND MY WILL LIKE *STEEL*!
I WILL SET THIS WORLD *ABLAZE* LEAVING NAUGHT BUT BLOOD AND ASH IN MY WAKE
UNTIL THAT FATEFUL DAY WHEN I CAN *SPIT* ON MORDATH'S BROKEN CORPSE AND CONDEMN HIS SOUL TO ETERNAL DAMNATION!
OUR GOOD COMPANY HAS REACHED A *CROSSROADS*
YOU MAY CONTINUE WITH ME IF YOU WISH, BUT BE WARNED I WILL LET *NO ONE* AND *NO THING* IMPEDE ME FROM MY TASK
NOW, LET'S FIND A WAY *OFF* THIS DAMNED ISLAND!
THIS IS BAD, CASS. I'VE NEVER *SEEN* HER LIKE THIS BEFORE
WE'D BETTER KEEP AN EYE ON HER
I DON'T LIKE WHERE THIS IS *HEADING*


HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?
WHERE IS SHE? IS SHE DEAD?
UNLIKELY I WOULD HAVE FELT HER PASSING
WHAT, THEN? HOW CAN SHE SIMPLY VANISH FROM THE FACE OF THE WORLD?
THE GAME IS NOT LIFE, LORD PALLIAS. MERELY A REPRESENTATION OF IT A REFLECTION
YOU SEEK TO IMPOSE YOUR WILL UPON IT, BUT LIKE THE GAME, YOU DO NOT HAVE TRUE CONTROL, JUST THE ILLUSION OF IT
HOW FARES THIS FOR ILLUSION, MY DARLING?
PERHAPS IT IS NOT THE GAME WHICH DECEIVES MY EYE, BUT YOU, DODONA!
ghuhk
WHAT SAY YOU, MISSY? ARE YOU PLAYING ME FALSE?
Nuh nh NO, MY LORD


Uhh
THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO HEAR THERE'S A GOOD GIRL
WHY DO YOU ABUSE ME SO? I AM TITHED TO YOU. I AM LOYAL, I CANNOT BE ANYTHING OTHER
AND OCCASIONALLY YOU NEED TO BE REMINDED OF THAT FACT
I TURNED THE KNIVES OF MORDATH'S OWN LACKEYS AGAINST HIM I AM NOT FOOL ENOUGH TO THINK IT DID NOT GIVE YOU IDEAS
NOW TO THE MATTER AT HAND, AND THE FATE OF OUR MISSING WARRIOR
PERHAPS SHE ONLY APPEARS TO BE MISSING. WHAT IF SHE IS STILL PRESENT BUT HIDDEN FROM OUR GAZE?
EXPLAIN
PERHAPS SHE IS IN A PLACE OF MAGIC, OLD MAGIC, OLD AS QUINTESSENCE, FROM BEFORE THE MOON FELL


". MAGIC SO ANCIENT AND VAST, IT IS AS IF WE CANNOT SEE THE WOOD FOR THE TREES!"
ARWYN!
ARWYN, WAIT!
LET HER GO SHE NEEDS TIME TO HERSELF
SORRY, BUT IT'S A LUXURY WE DON'T HAVE
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
LOOK AT YOUR FEET, CASS. WE'RE ON A WELL-TRODDEN PATH ON A SUPPOSED DESERT ISLAND.
THERE ARE NO ANIMAL TRACKS, SO IT'S NOT A GAME TRAIL.
CHANCES ARE WE'RE NOT ALONE HERE, AND THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING IF THE NATIVES ARE FRIENDLY
WHICH, GIVEN THE WAY OUR LUCK USUALLY RUNS, THEY PROBABLY AREN'T!
ARWYN, STOP!
WHAT?
WHAT IS IT THAT'S SO IMPORTANT?


STAND BACK!
LET ME THROUGH!
LET THE DOG SEE THE RABBIT!
Hmm, VERY GOOD
VERY FIRM, VERY FRESH
THEY'LL DO. Oh, YES! Oh, MY!
SET US FREE NOW!
NO, I DON'T THINK SO. THAT WOULDN'T BE VERY CLEVER OF ME NOW WOULD IT, hmm?
AND I AM CLEVER YOU KNOW, REALLY TRULY!
BIND THEM
BRING THEM.
GATHER THEIR WEAPONS.
YOU'VE ARRIVED JUST AT THE RIGHT TIME. THERE'S A LOT OF WORK TO DO, ALWAYS IS!
Oh, YES! IT'S ALWAYS BUSY, BUSY, BUSY

I THINK WE COULD BE IN *TROUBLE*

TIK

WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY ANYTHING *SOONER?*

I DAMN WELL *TRIED*, BUT YOU WERE BUSY *STORMING OFF!*

THERE'S NO ROOM TO DRAW MY SWORD

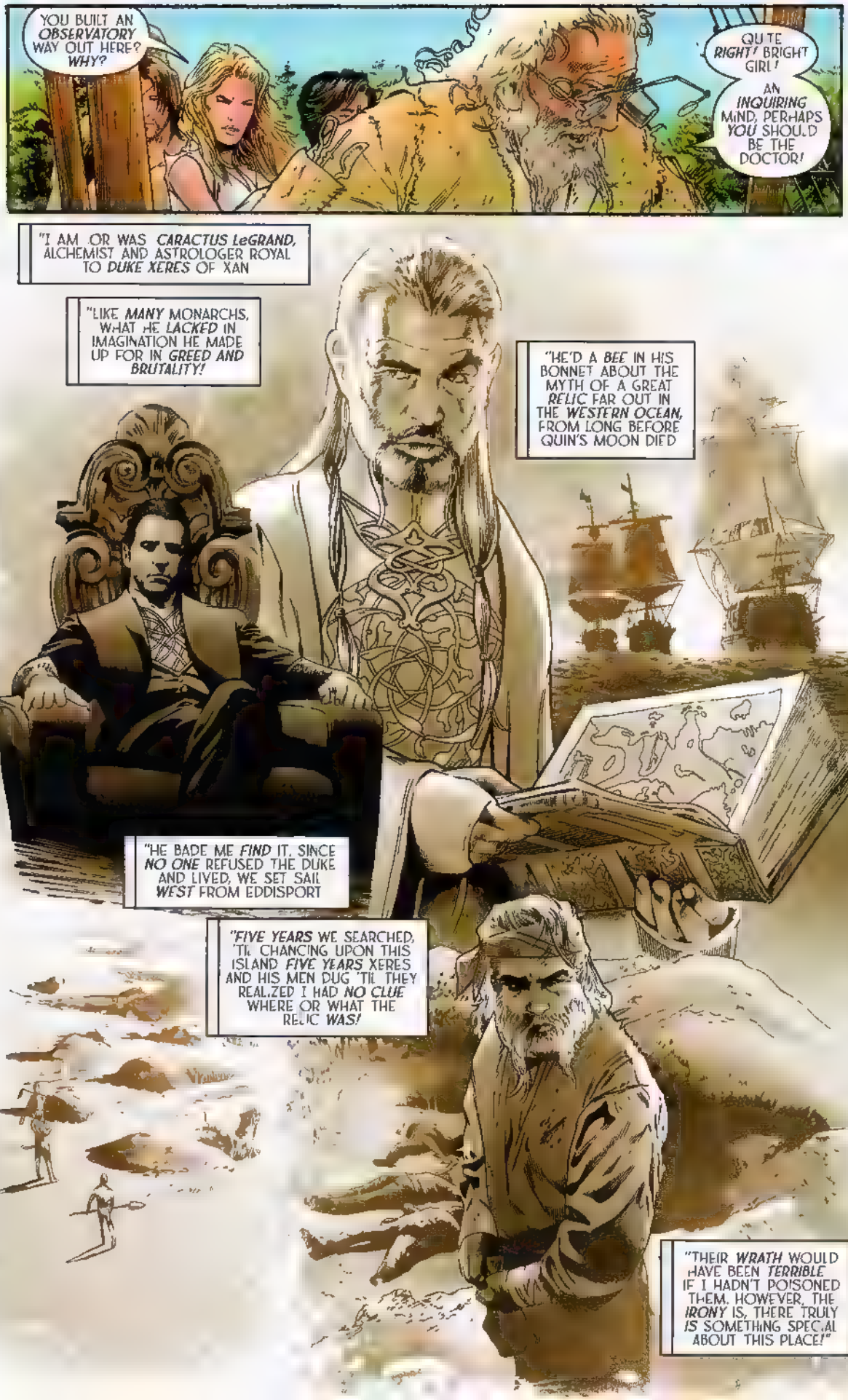
CASSIDY, CAN YOU REACH YOUR DAGGER?

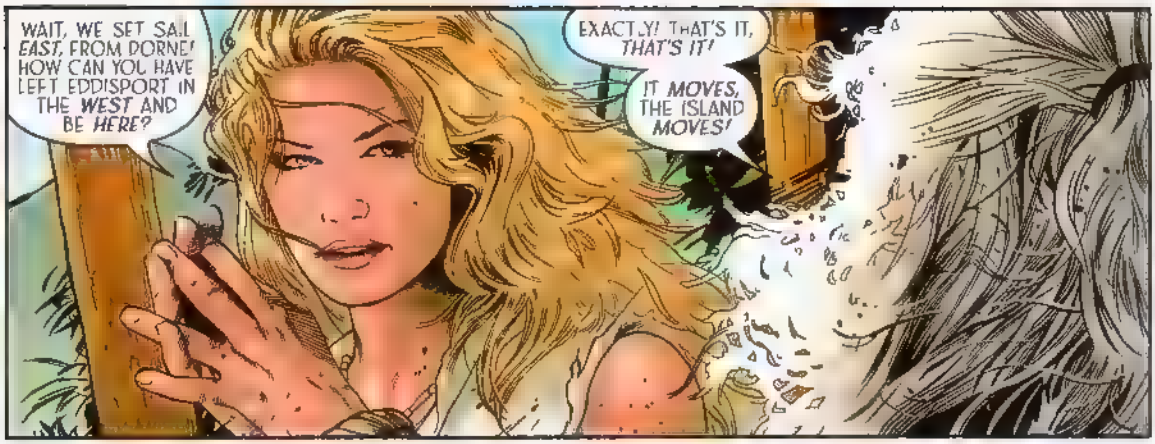
NO, I *CAN'T*

NOT THAT IT'D DO US MUCH *GOOD* ANYWAY

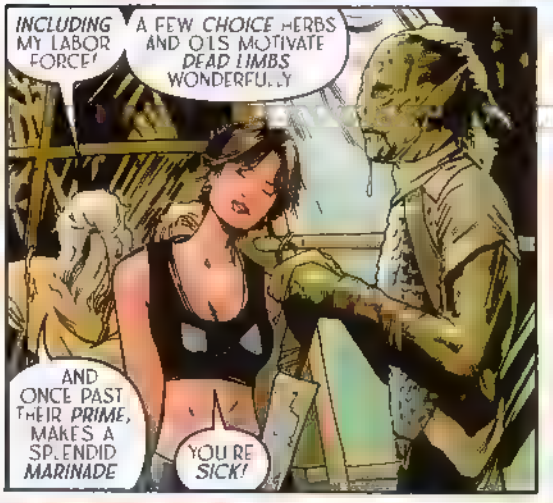
AND MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK!
MY RESEARCH, MY STUDIES, SO MUCH TO DO, SO LITTLE TIME!
STUDIES? YOU'RE AN ACADEMIC?
FUNNILY ENOUGH, I'M A DOCTOR MYSELF!
YOU HEARD THAT TOO, RIGHT?
HE'S UP TO SOMETHING WE'RE DOOMED!
A DOCTOR YOU SAY? WHAT'S YOUR FIELD OF EXPERTISE?
Uh, WHY, GREEN THINGS, THAT GROW
BOTANY, YOU IDIOT
ALSO TECHNICALLY KNOWN AS BOTANY, YOU IDIOT
WHAT DID YOU SAY?

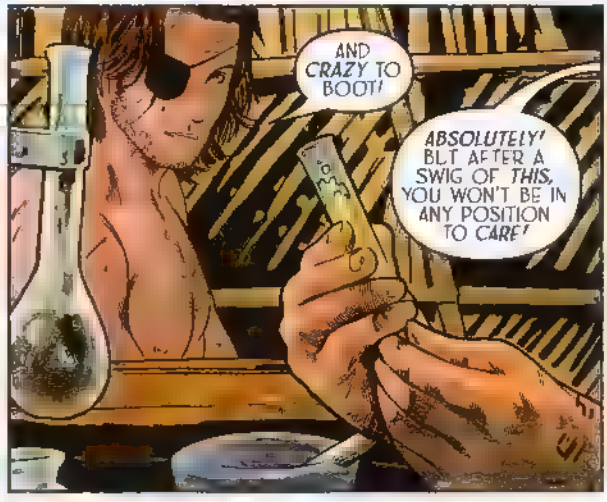
JUST THAT MY ASSISTANTS AND I WERE ON AN EXPEDITION WHEN A STORM SANK OUR SHIP FROM UNDER US
Hmm, YES, PITY NEVER MIND
PLANTS, eh? CAN'T SAY AS I'M BOTHERED ONLY GOOD FOR EATING AND BLOWING YOUR NOSE ON
NOW PLANETS! THAT'S SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY!

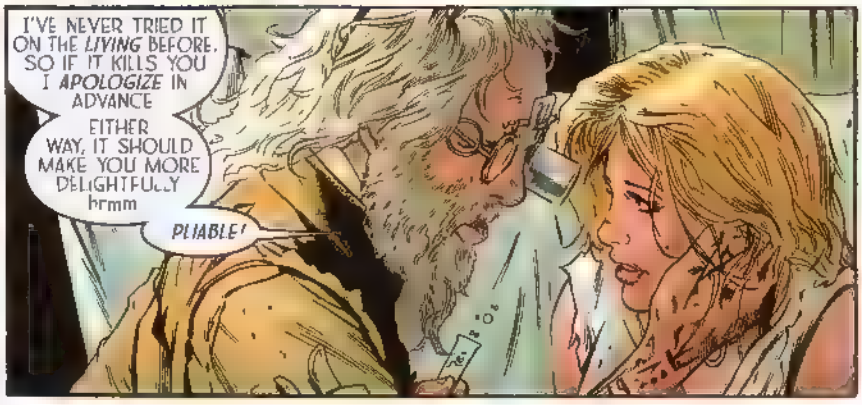

YOU BUILT AN OBSERVATORY WAY OUT HERE? WHY?
QUITE RIGHT! BRIGHT GIRL! AN INQUIRING MIND, PERHAPS YOU SHOULD BE THE DOCTOR!
"I AM OR WAS CARACTUS LeGRAND, ALCHEMIST AND ASTROLOGER ROYAL TO DUKE XERES OF XAN
"LIKE MANY MONARCHS, WHAT HE LACKED IN IMAGINATION HE MADE UP FOR IN GREED AND BRUTALITY!
"HE'D A BEE IN HIS BONNET ABOUT THE MYTH OF A GREAT RELIC FAR OUT IN THE WESTERN OCEAN, FROM LONG BEFORE QUIN'S MOON DIED
"HE BADE ME FIND IT, SINCE NO ONE REFUSED THE DUKE AND LIVED. WE SET SAIL WEST FROM EDDISPORT
"FIVE YEARS WE SEARCHED, 'TIL CHANCING UPON THIS ISLAND FIVE YEARS XERES AND HIS MEN DUG 'TIL THEY REALIZED I HAD NO CLUE WHERE OR WHAT THE RELIC WAS!
"THEIR WRATH WOULD HAVE BEEN TERRIBLE IF I HADN'T POISONED THEM. HOWEVER, THE IRONY IS, THERE TRULY IS SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT THIS PLACE!"


WAIT, WE SET SAIL *EAST*, FROM DORNE! HOW CAN YOU HAVE LEFT EDDISPORT IN THE *WEST* AND BE *HERE*?
EXACTLY! THAT'S IT, *THAT'S IT!*
IT *MOVES*, THE ISLAND *MOVES!*

I MADE THE *TELESCOPE* TO PLOT ITS COURSE BY THE STARS, BUT THERE'S NO *RHYME* OR *REASON* TO IT!
IT *TRAVERSES* THE GLOBE ECCENTRICALLY CROSSING *HUNDREDS* OF SHIPPING LANES.
SOMETHING *NEW* WASHES ASHORE EVERY WEEK. THAT'S HOW I STOCK MY CUPBOARD—THE SEA PROVIDES *ALL!*


INCLUDING MY LABOR FORCE!
A FEW *CHOICE* HERBS AND OILS MOTIVATE *DEAD LIMBS* WONDERFULLY
AND ONCE PAST THEIR *PRIME*, MAKES A SPLENDID *MARINADE*
YOU'RE *SICK!*


AND *CRAZY* TO BOOT!
ABSOLUTELY! BUT AFTER A SWIG OF *THIS*, YOU WON'T BE IN ANY POSITION TO *CARE!*

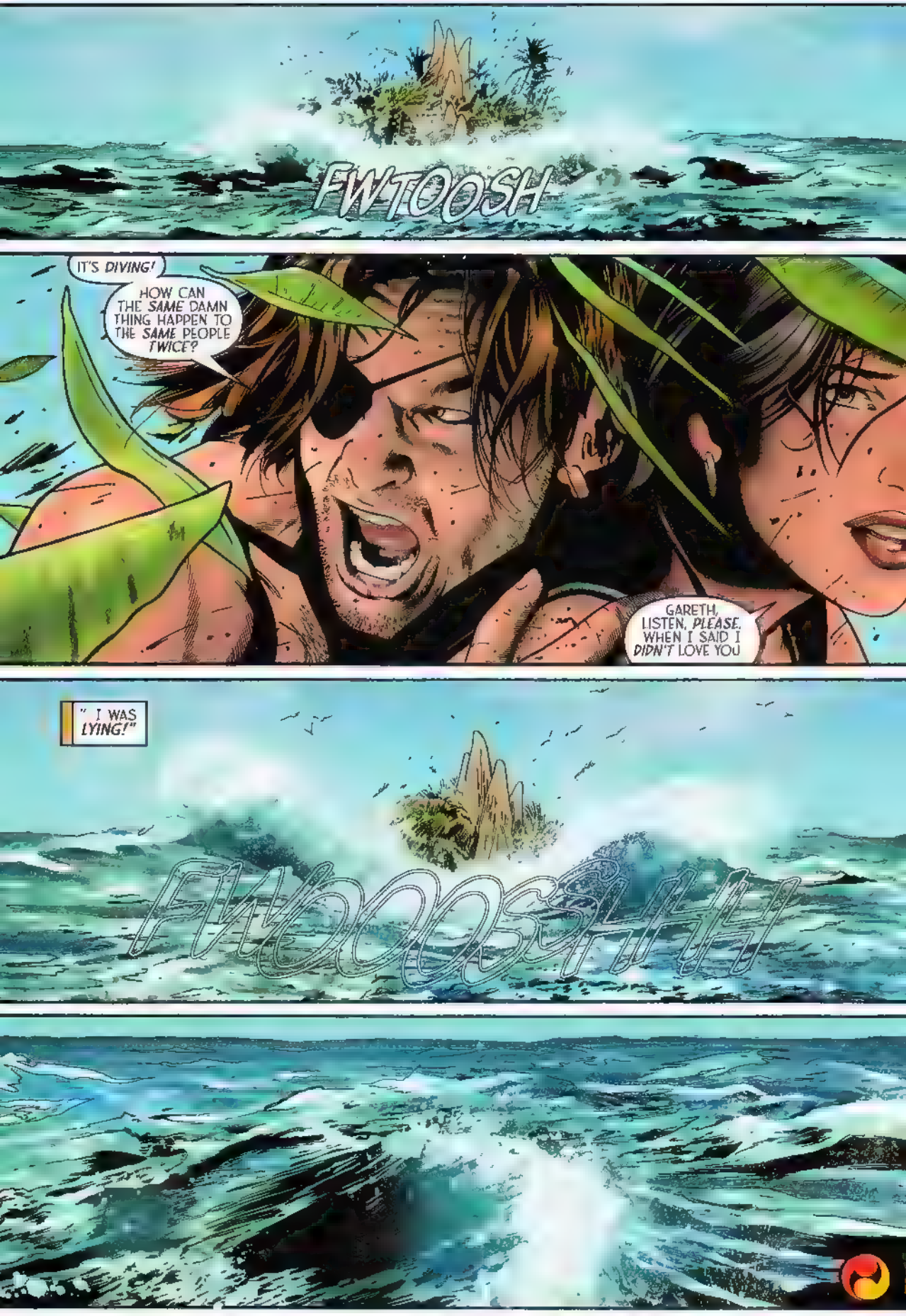

I'VE NEVER TRIED IT ON THE *LIVING* BEFORE. SO IF IT KILLS YOU I *APOLOGIZE* IN ADVANCE
EITHER WAY, IT SHOULD MAKE YOU MORE DELIGHTFULLY hrmm
PLIABLE!

FREAK!
WHOK
GUKK!
TIME TO GO, BOYS AND GIRLS!
OUR WEAPONS?
H S ZOMBIES HAVE THEM!
HAD THEM!
SHIFF
CASS, I LOVE YOU!
NO, YOU DON'T, YOU'RE JUST GRATEFUL BUT I APPRECIATE THE SENTIMENT!
KILL THEM!
KILL THEM ALL!

NRRRR
THIS VILE PIT *STINKS* OF THE CHARNEL HOUSE! MOLDERING BONES AND *FOUL* GREY FLESH! LIFELESSNESS MADE *LIFE!*
JUST LIKE *HIM!* LIKE *MORDATH!*
AND YOU'LL *ALL* TASTE HIS *FATE!*
THOOM
WE SHOULD WATCH HER *BACK!*
SHE'LL BE *FINE!* SHE'S GOT TO WORK IT OUT OF HER SYSTEM!
NO
MORE
TEARS
GOOM

NO!
NOT MY CHEMICALS!
KA GHOOWA
MMRRRR
WHAT WAS THAT?
EARTHQUAKE!
RRRMBB
NOT QUITE

"IT'S AN EYE OPENING!"
MMRRAWWHHH
NO! IT'S IT'S NOT FAIR! THE THE ISLAND IS THE RELIC!
ONE OF THE FABLED JUGGERNAUTS BENEATH MY FEET ALL THIS TIME!
NOT FOR MUCH LONGER!


FWTOOSH
IT'S DIVING!
HOW CAN THE SAME DAMN THING HAPPEN TO THE SAME PEOPLE TWICE?
GARETH, LISTEN, PLEASE, WHEN I SAID I DIDN'T LOVE YOU
"...I WAS LYING!"
FWOOSHH

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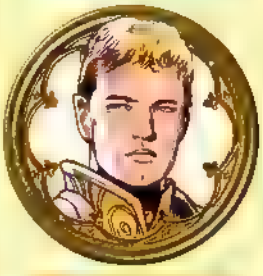
Our Story So Far...

Arwyn

Gareth

Cassidy



Pallias

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, pierced by an arrow shot from the bow of the legendary warrior Ayden. Before retreating to the solitude from which he'd come, Ayden broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments, scattering them to Quin's Five Lands and vowing to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb and again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not.

Swearing vengeance, Arwyn took up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments. Armed with Ayden's bow and accompanied by her dog Kreeg, the adventurer Gareth and the thief Cassidy, Arwyn dedicated herself to bringing about Mordath's destruction.

Having found the first two fragments, Arwyn was in pursuit of the third when she was betrayed by the Urnethi, the mysterious dwellers of the desert wastes. A prisoner of Mordath's trolls led by the savage Bohr, Arwyn was being escorted back to Mordath's fortress, when they were attacked and slaughtered by a pack of wasteland beasts. Only by aiding one another did Arwyn and Bohr survive the battle before going their separate ways.

Now reunited with Gareth and Cassidy, and with three fragments once more in her possession. Arwyn embarks on a perilous sea voyage North to Skarnhime, home of the Iskani — the Ice Trolls — and the fourth fragment. Meanwhile, the mysterious mage Pallias is working behind the scenes, covertly contesting Mordath's grip on the Five Lands.

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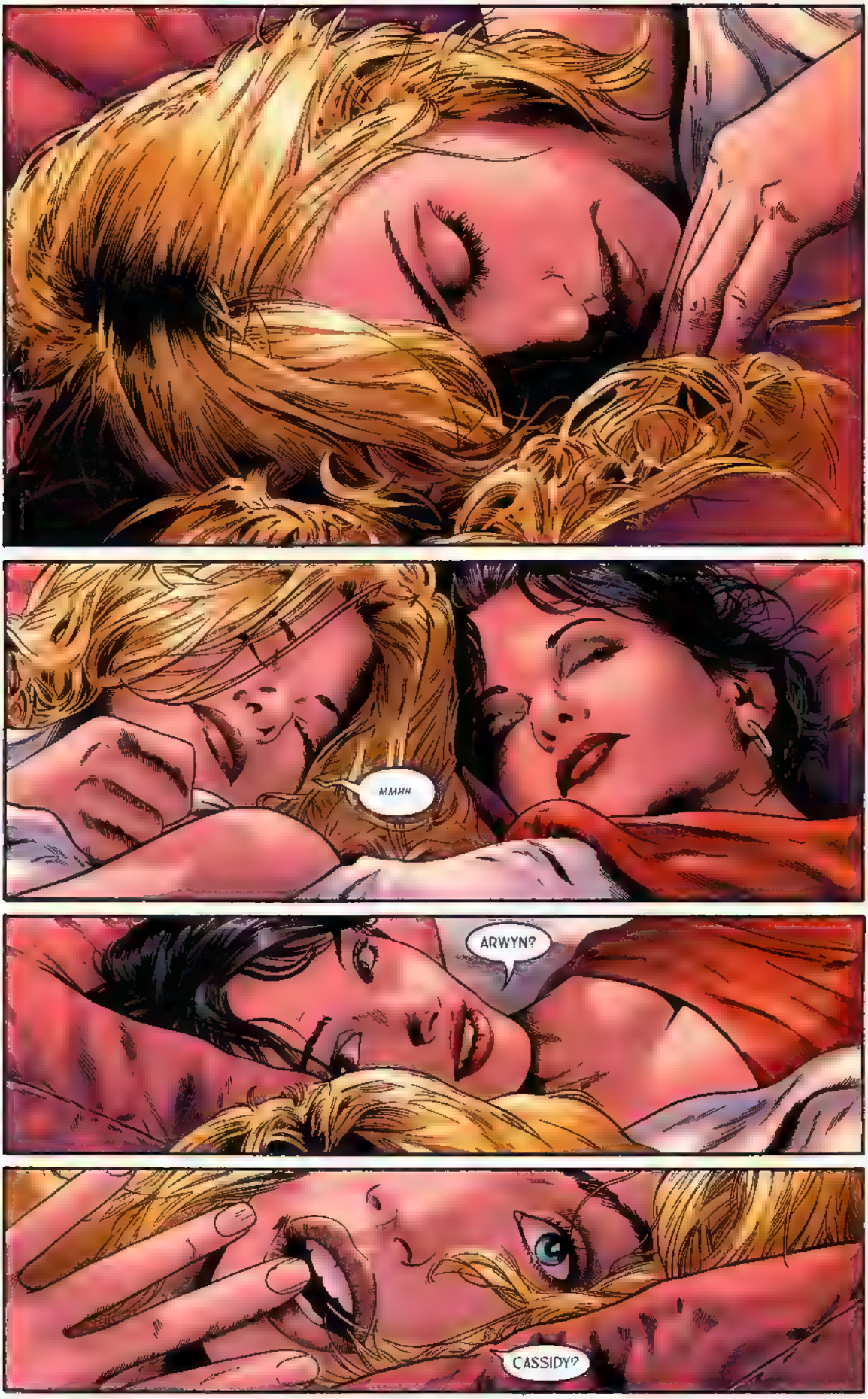
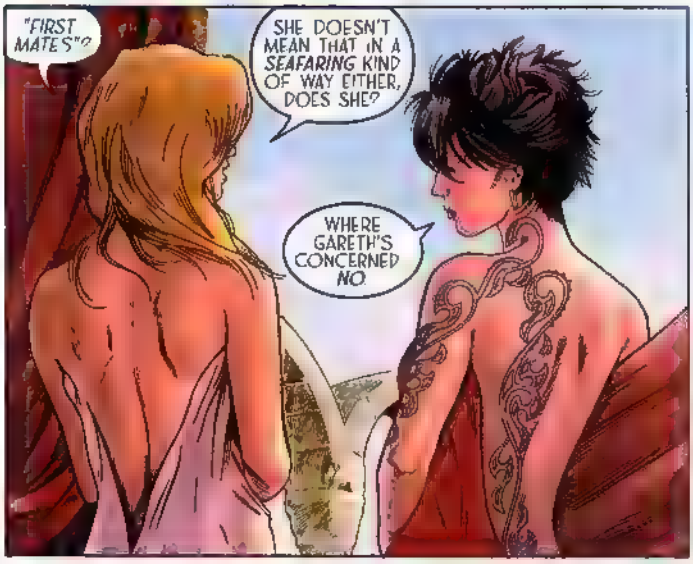
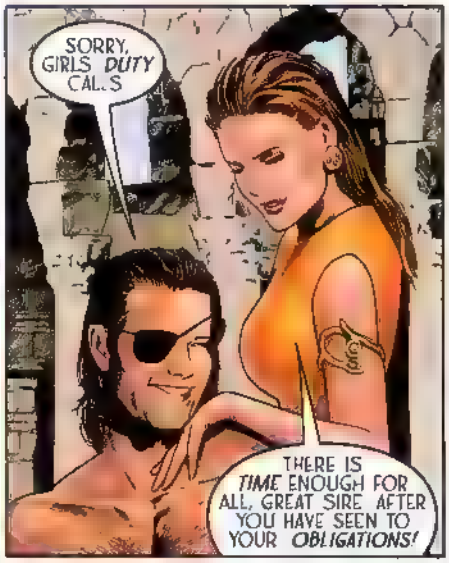

MMHH
ARWYN?
CASSIDY?

WHAT WHAT *IS* THIS PLACE? ***WHERE*** ARE WE?
WHY ARE YOU ASKING ***ME***? I JUST GOT HERE ***MYSELF***!
LAST THING I RECALL IS FIGHTING ***UNDEAD*** FLITCHES ON THE BACK OF A ***GIANT*** SEA BEAST WITH THE ***OCEAN*** RUSHING UP TO MEET US!
JUST THE SAME OLD, SAME OLD, REALLY!
WELL, ***ONE*** THING'S FOR CERTAIN UNLESS THE ***AFTERLIFE*** HAS A ***LAUNDRY*** SERVICE, WE'RE NOT DEAD

BUT WE ARE MISSING SOMETHING
Hee hee hee! Oh, GARETH!
OR SOMEONE!
YOU'RE FIBBING, SURELY!
YOU FOUGHT OFF ALL THOSE TROLLS USING ONLY YOUR BARE HANDS?
NOW, LADIES, WOULD I LIE TO YOU?
IT DEPENDS IF YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING HE'S AFTER!
CASS! ARWYN! YOU'RE AWAKE!
NICE OF YOU TO NOTICE!

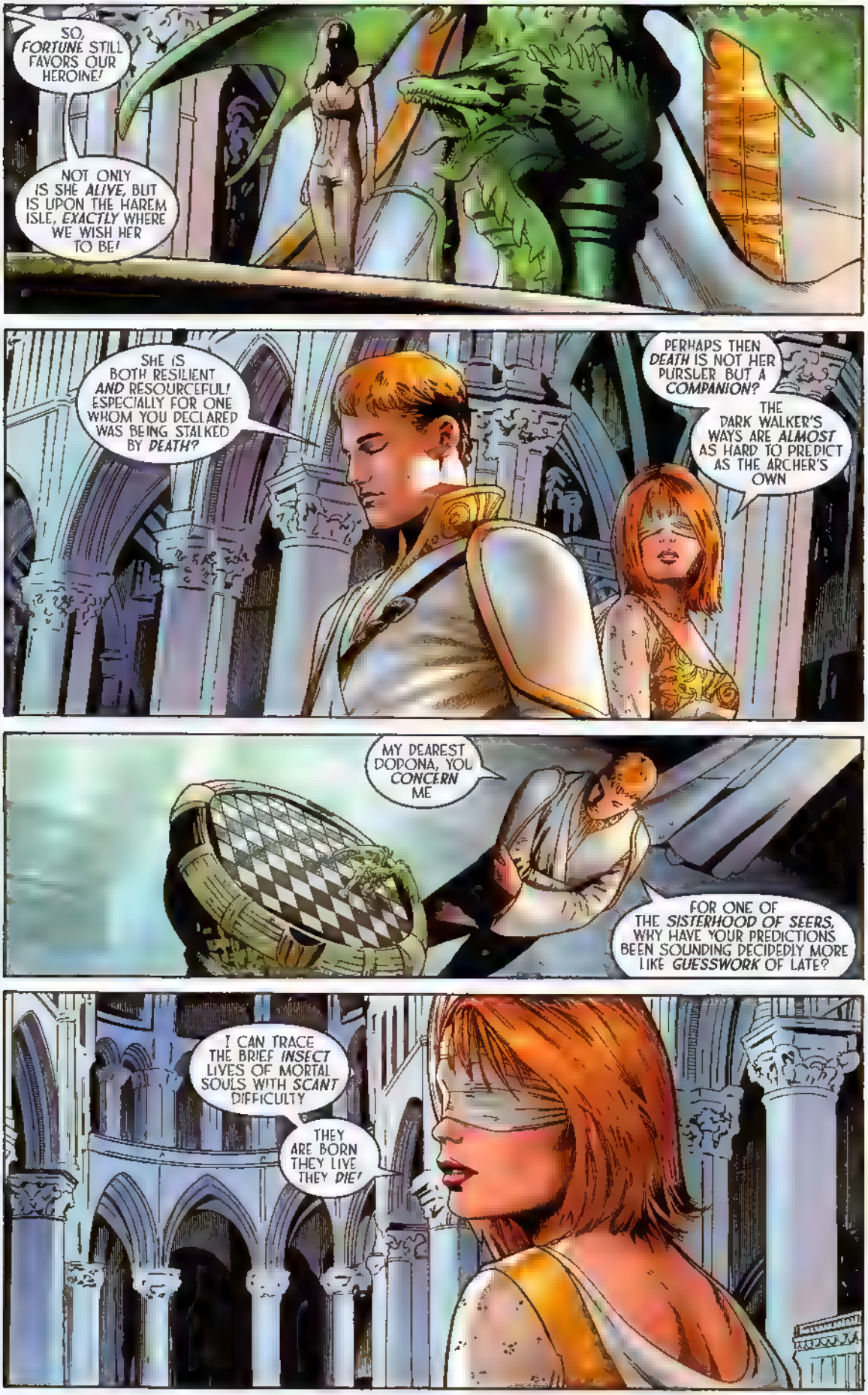
PLEASE, DO NOT BLAME THE GREAT SIRE
IT WAS AN HONOR TO ENTERTAIN HIM WHILE HIS FIRST MATES RESTED

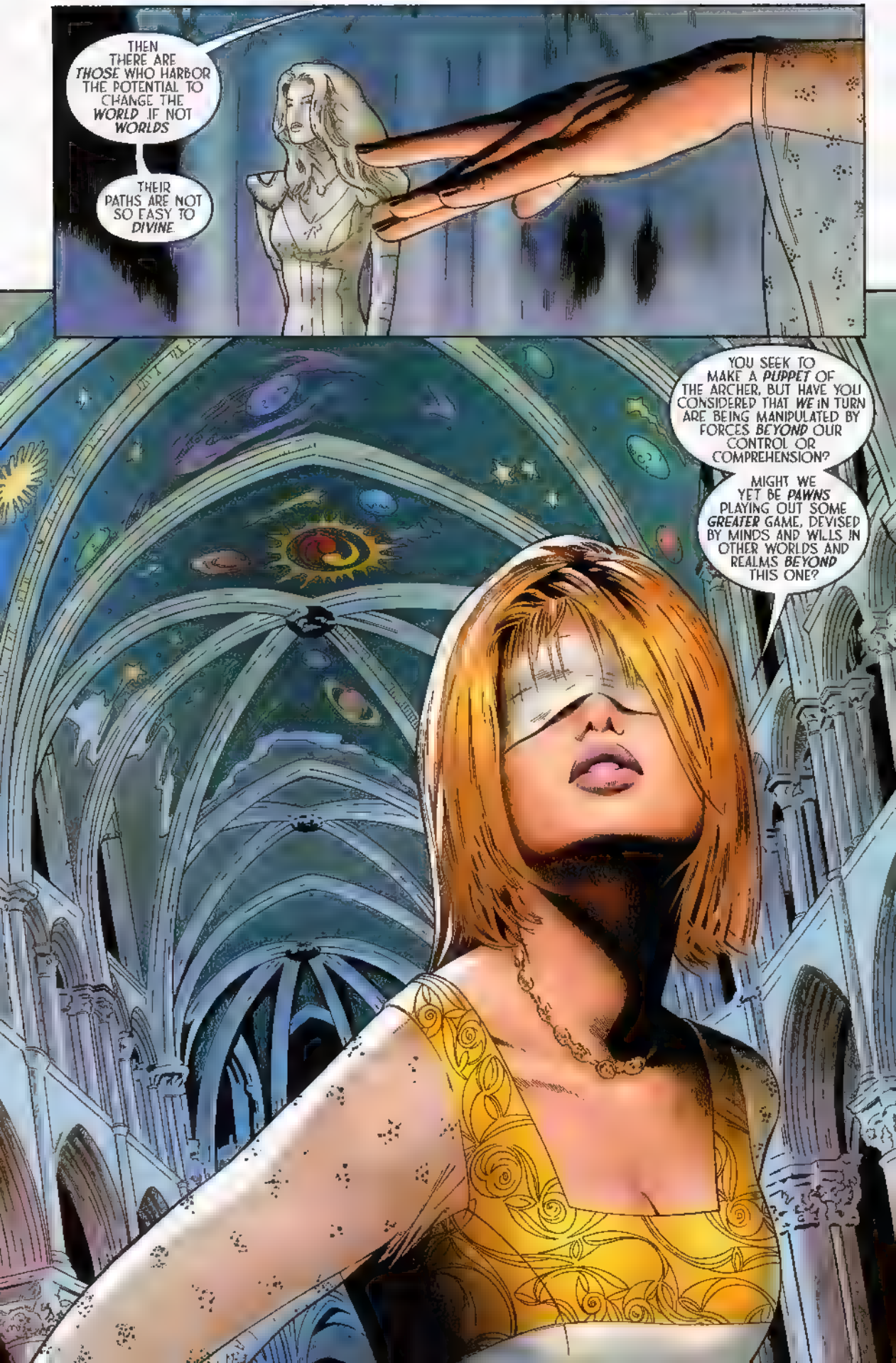

"FIRST MATES"?
SHE DOESN'T MEAN THAT IN A SEAFARING KIND OF WAY EITHER, DOES SHE?
WHERE GARETH'S CONCERNED NO

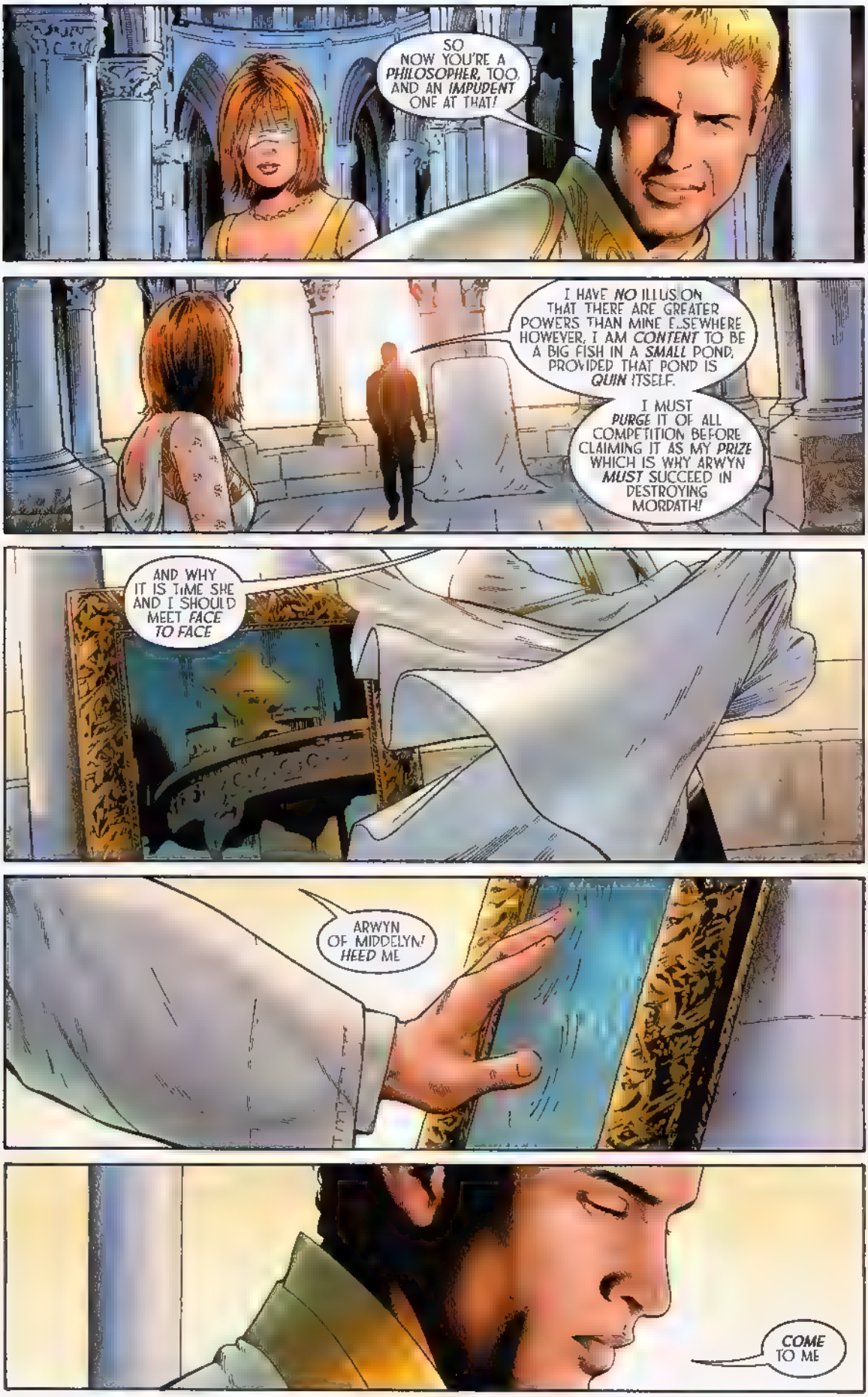

SORRY, GIRLS DUTY CALLS
THERE IS TIME ENOUGH FOR ALL, GREAT SIRE AFTER YOU HAVE SEEN TO YOUR OBLIGATIONS!

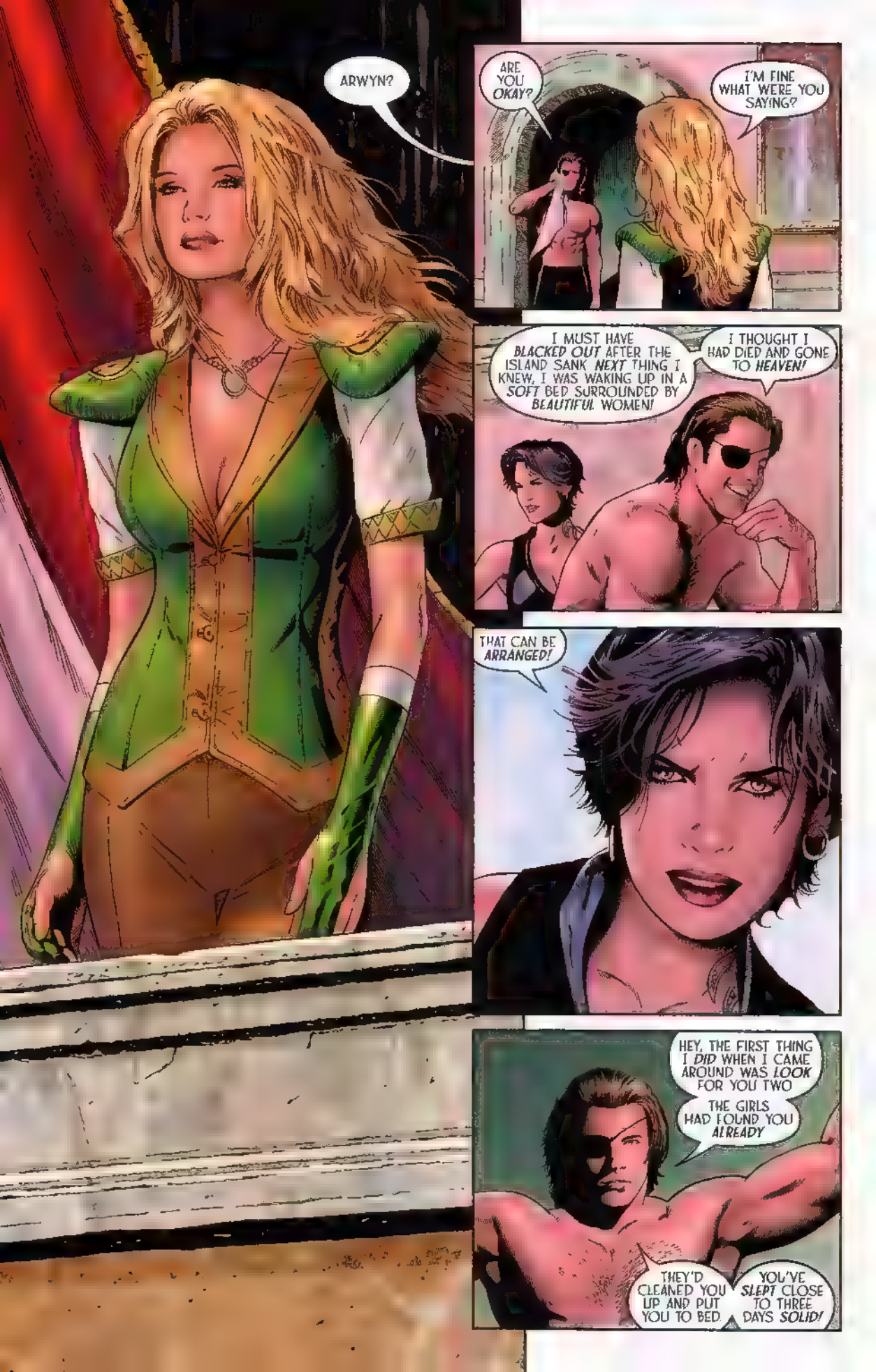
Oh, GREAT SIRE GARETH, DARLING! GET UP HERE, NOW!
Uh, CASSIDY

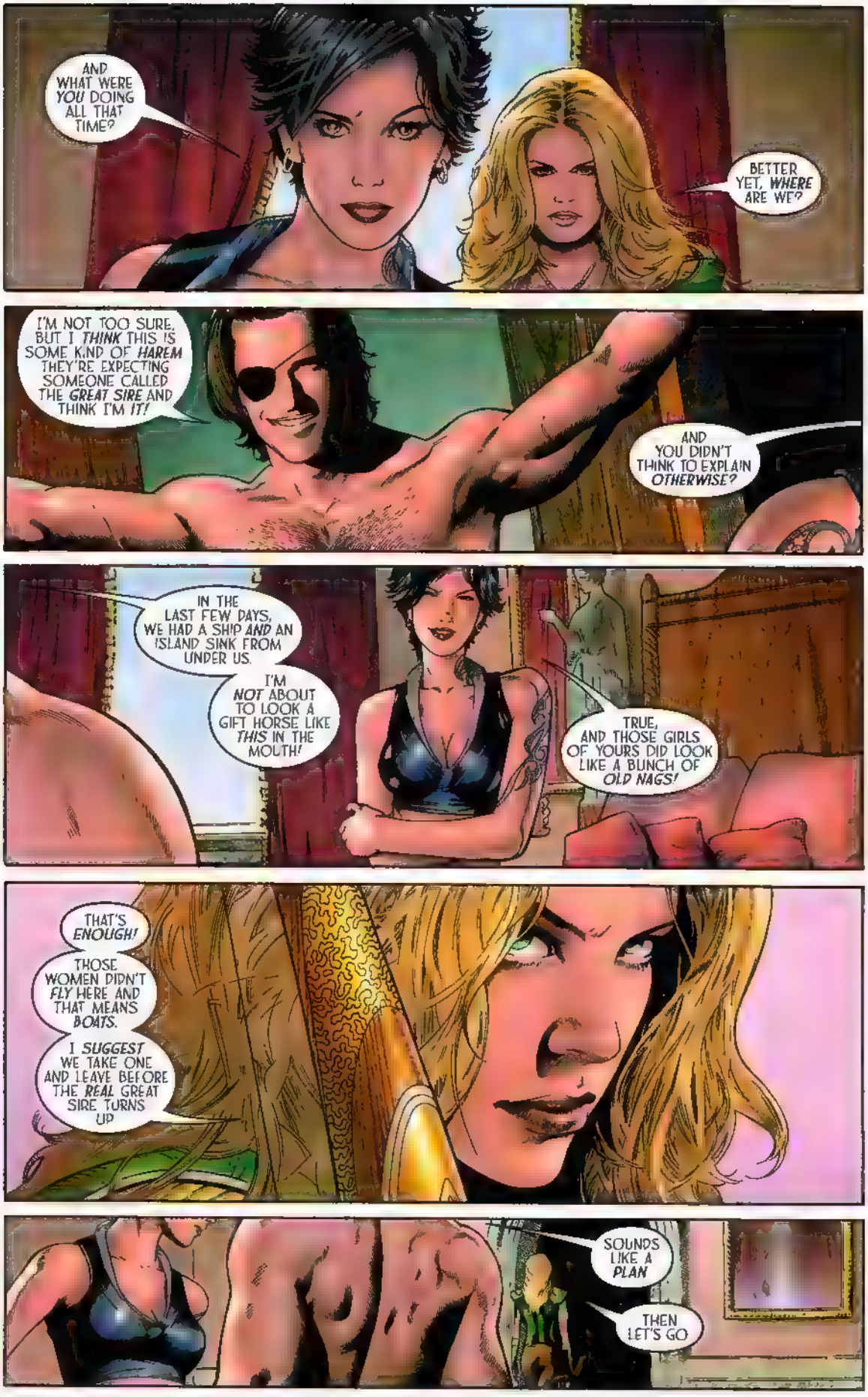
I KNOW YOU AND GARETH HAVE A HISTORY, BUT I'D PREFER TO SEE HIM 'N SOMETHING OTHER THAN CURTAINS, IF IT'S ALL THE SAME TO YOU?


SO, FORTUNE STILL FAVORS OUR HEROINE!
NOT ONLY IS SHE ALIVE, BUT IS UPON THE HAREM ISLE, EXACTLY WHERE WE WISH HER TO BE!
SHE IS BOTH RESILIENT AND RESOURCEFUL! ESPECIALLY FOR ONE WHOM YOU DECLARED WAS BEING STALKED BY DEATH?
PERHAPS THEN DEATH IS NOT HER PURSUER BUT A COMPANION?
THE DARK WALKER'S WAYS ARE ALMOST AS HARD TO PREDICT AS THE ARCHER'S OWN
MY DEAREST DODONA, YOU CONCERN ME
FOR ONE OF THE SISTERHOOD OF SEERS, WHY HAVE YOUR PREDICTIONS BEEN SOUNDING DECIDEDLY MORE LIKE GUESSWORK OF LATE?
I CAN TRACE THE BRIEF INSECT LIVES OF MORTAL SOULS WITH SCANT DIFFICULTY
THEY ARE BORN THEY LIVE THEY DIE!

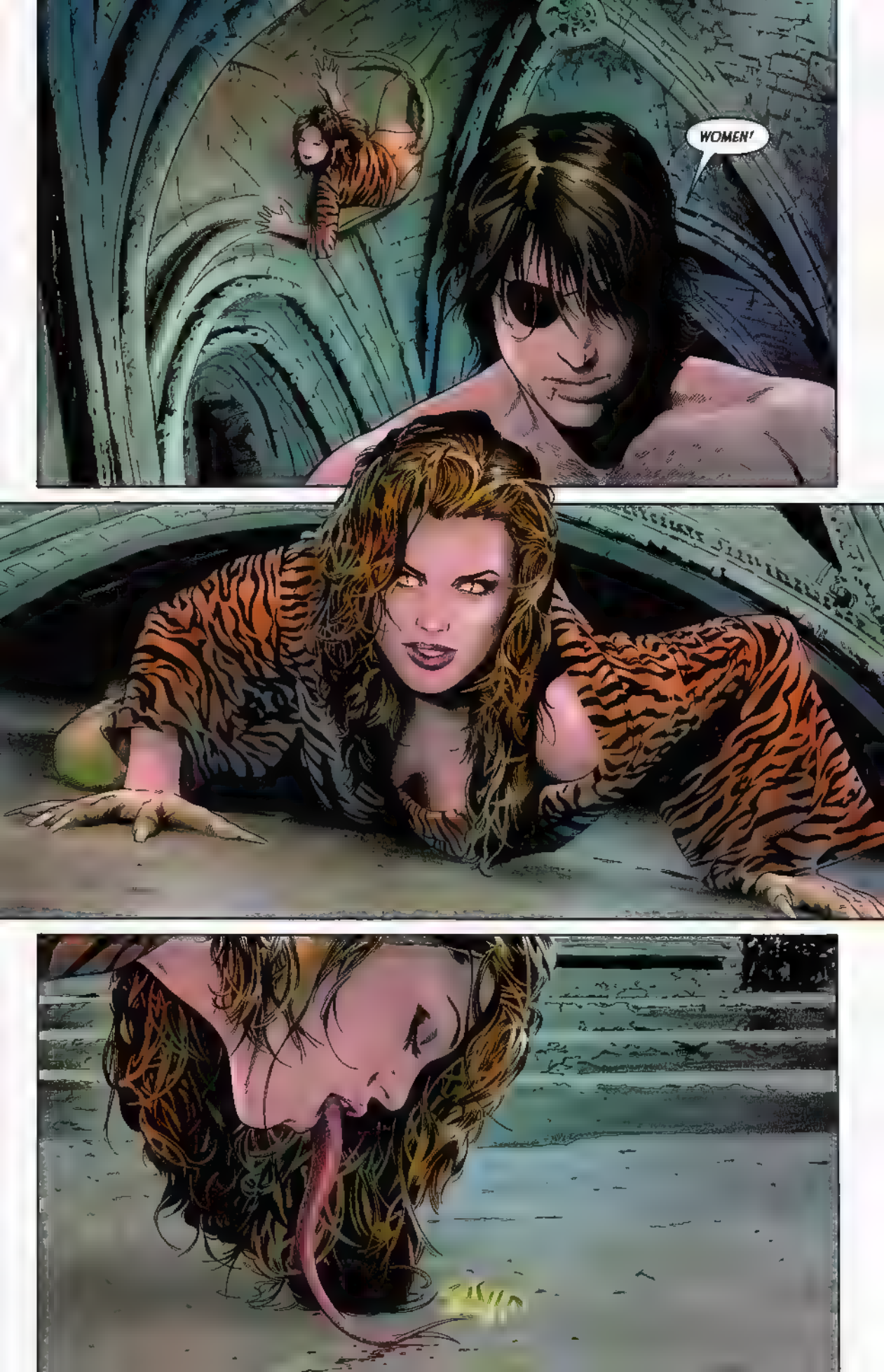

THEN THERE ARE *THOSE* WHO HARBOR THE POTENTIAL TO CHANGE THE *WORLD* IF NOT *WORLDS*
THEIR PATHS ARE NOT SO EASY TO *DIVINE*
YOU SEEK TO MAKE A *PUPPET* OF THE ARCHER, BUT HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THAT *WE* IN TURN ARE BEING MANIPULATED BY FORCES *BEYOND* OUR CONTROL OR COMPREHENSION?
MIGHT WE YET BE *PAWNS* PLAYING OUT SOME *GREATER* GAME, DEVISED BY MINDS AND WILLS IN OTHER WORLDS AND REALMS *BEYOND* THIS ONE?


SO NOW YOU'RE A PHILOSOPHER, TOO, AND AN IMPUDENT ONE AT THAT!
I HAVE NO ILLUSION THAT THERE ARE GREATER POWERS THAN MINE ELSEWHERE HOWEVER, I AM CONTENT TO BE A BIG FISH IN A SMALL POND, PROVIDED THAT POND IS QUIN ITSELF.
I MUST PURGE IT OF ALL COMPETITION BEFORE CLAIMING IT AS MY PRIZE WHICH IS WHY ARWYN MUST SUCCEED IN DESTROYING MORDATH!
AND WHY IT IS TIME SHE AND I SHOULD MEET FACE TO FACE
ARWYN OF MIDDELYN! HEED ME
COME TO ME


ARWYN?
ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M FINE WHAT WERE YOU SAYING?
I MUST HAVE BLACKED OUT AFTER THE ISLAND SANK NEXT THING I KNEW, I WAS WAKING UP IN A SOFT BED SURROUNDED BY BEAUTIFUL WOMEN!
I THOUGHT I HAD DIED AND GONE TO HEAVEN!
THAT CAN BE ARRANGED!
HEY, THE FIRST THING I DID WHEN I CAME AROUND WAS LOOK FOR YOU TWO
THE GIRLS HAD FOUND YOU ALREADY
THEY'D CLEANED YOU UP AND PUT YOU TO BED
YOU'VE SLEPT CLOSE TO THREE DAYS SOLID!


AND WHAT WERE *YOU* DOING ALL THAT TIME?
BETTER YET, *WHERE* ARE WE?
I'M NOT TOO SURE, BUT I *THINK* THIS IS SOME KIND OF *HAREM* THEY'RE EXPECTING SOMEONE CALLED THE *GREAT SIRE* AND THINK I'M *IT!*
AND YOU DIDN'T THINK TO EXPLAIN *OTHERWISE?*
IN THE LAST FEW DAYS, WE HAD A SHIP *AND* AN ISLAND SINK FROM UNDER US.
I'M *NOT* ABOUT TO LOOK A GIFT HORSE LIKE *THIS* IN THE MOUTH!
TRUE, AND THOSE GIRLS OF YOURS DID LOOK LIKE A BUNCH OF *OLD NAGS!*
THAT'S *ENOUGH!*
THOSE WOMEN DIDN'T *FLY* HERE AND THAT MEANS *BOATS.*
I *SUGGEST* WE TAKE ONE AND LEAVE BEFORE THE *REAL* GREAT SIRE TURNS UP
SOUNDS LIKE A *PLAN*
THEN LET'S GO

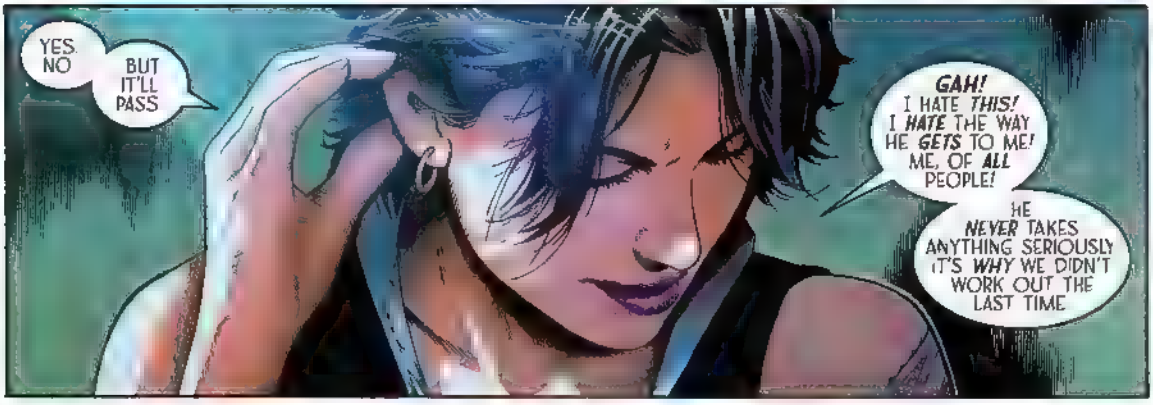
GARETH, DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT I *SAID* TO YOU JUST BEFORE THE ISLAND SANK?
Uh, NO IT WASN'T ANYTHING *IMPORTANT*, WAS IT?
NO, NOT REALLY
THOK
WHAT WAS *THAT* FOR?
YOU WORK IT OUT!


WOMEN!

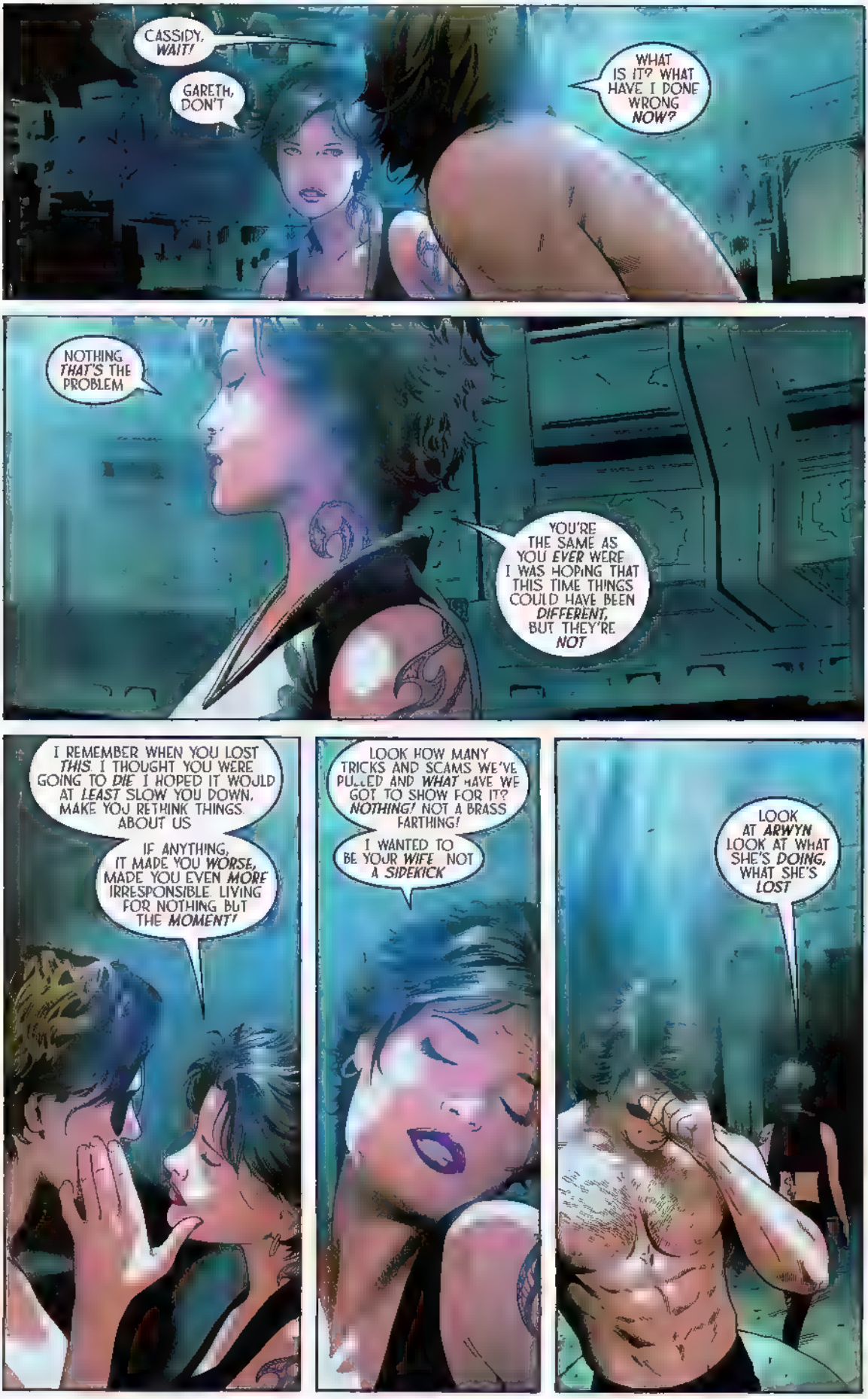
WELL, THIS IS *DIFFERENT*?
THIS PLACE IS *VIRTUALLY* A RUIN, SO HOW COME THOSE BITS OF *FLUFF* ARE LIVING HERE?

WHAT'S *MORE*, WHY HAVEN'T WE SEEN ANY SERVANTS OR *GUARDS*? THOSE LADIES DON'T LOOK LIKE THE TYPE TO BE *BIG* ON HOUSE WORK

JUST THE WAY HE *LIKES* THEM!
CASS CASSIDY? ARE YOU *FEELING* ALRIGHT?


YES NO BUT IT'LL PASS
GAH! I HATE *THIS!* I *HATE* THE WAY HE *GETS* TO ME! ME, OF *ALL* PEOPLE!
HE *NEVER* TAKES ANYTHING SERIOUSLY IT'S *WHY* WE DIDN'T WORK OUT THE LAST TIME

I THOUGHT I COULD DEAL WITH IT. JUST BE FRIENDS. NO COMPLICATIONS, BUT HE WORKS HIS WAY UNDER YOUR SKIN, YOU KNOW?
LIKE A TICK!
WOW! GUESS IT MUST BE THE MAID'S DAY OFF?
ACTUALLY, I WAS THINKING OF A LOUSE!
HAH! A BOAT JUST ABOUT MY UNDERWEAR PROBABLY HAS LESS HOLES IN IT
IT'LL DO
COME ON! CAN'T WE AT LEAST FIND SOMETHING A LITTLE BETTER?
NO
DON'T I GET A SAY IN THIS?
NO


CASSIDY, WAIT!
GARETH, DON'T
WHAT IS IT? WHAT HAVE I DONE WRONG NOW?
NOTHING. THAT'S THE PROBLEM
YOU'RE THE SAME AS YOU EVER WERE I WAS HOPING THAT THIS TIME THINGS COULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT, BUT THEY'RE NOT
I REMEMBER WHEN YOU LOST THIS. I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO DIE. I HOPED IT WOULD AT LEAST SLOW YOU DOWN, MAKE YOU RETHINK THINGS. ABOUT US
IF ANYTHING, IT MADE YOU WORSE, MADE YOU EVEN MORE IRRESPONSIBLE. LIVING FOR NOTHING BUT THE MOMENT!
LOOK HOW MANY TRICKS AND SCAMS WE'VE PULLED AND WHAT HAVE WE GOT TO SHOW FOR IT? NOTHING! NOT A BRASS FARTHING!
I WANTED TO BE YOUR WIFE. NOT A SIDEKICK
LOOK AT ARWYN. LOOK AT WHAT SHE'S DOING, WHAT SHE'S LOST

" WOULD YOU HAVE DONE THE SAME FOR ME?"
ARWYN
HELLO? CASSIDY? GARETH?
WHO IS IT? WHO'S THERE?
ARWYN
WE ARE HERE
WHO ARE YOU, I
Oh, MY

DARIAN NEERA! THIS CAN'T BE!
HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?
STEP THROUGH, JOIN US. EVERYTHING WILL BE EXPLAINED.

IT'S A TRICK, AN ILLUSION!
TRUST ME PLEASE?
REACH OUT, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.
ARWYN?

ANY SIGN?

NO. THIS PLACE IS A *MAZE*

TRY IN THERE

CASS YOU'VE GOT TO *SEE* THIS!

I *DEFINITELY* DON'T WANT TO MEET THE *CHICKEN* THAT LAID THESE!

SOME OF THESE SHELLS HAVE BEEN HERE FOR *CENTURIES*. THEY'RE *PETRIFIED*, LIKE STONE. THEN THERE ARE OTHERS THAT LOOK ONLY A *FEW* YEARS OLD?

OH, NO.

WHAT IS IT?

A *DRAGON* SCALE!

HOW DO YOU *KNOW*?

TRUST ME, I *KNOW*

THIS IS A *HAREM*, ALL RIGHT, BUT FOR DRAGONS!

THIS HENHOUSE HAS BEEN *WAITING* FOR THE *ROOSTER* TO ARRIVE--AND THEY THINK *I'M* IT! SO WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THEY DISCOVER I'M *NOT* IT?

WE SHALL **PEEL** YOUR SKIN LIKE AN **ORANGE** AND **DEVOUR** YOUR FLESH RED, RAW, AND **DRIPPING!**

CASSIDY

WHAT?

RUN!

RRHARG!

THIS WAY!
NO!
SPLIT UP IT'S ME THEY WANT! GO FIND ARWYN!
GARETH
GO!
HSSS... THE FEMALE?
SHE WILL MAKE SPORT ENOUGH FOR US LATER! I HAVE THE TASTE FOR MAN FLESH!
C'MON! COME AND GET ME!
YOU COULDN'T KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF ME BEFORE - WHAT'S STOPPING YOU NOW?
RRROAAARRR
Oh, YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME!

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Arwyn

Previously In Sojourn

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, shot by an arrow by the legendary warrior Ayden. Before retreating to solitude, Ayden broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments, scattering them to Quin's Five Lands and vowing to return should the pieces ever be reunited.

Gareth

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb and again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not. Swearing vengeance, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments and destroy Mordath.

Cassidy

Armed with Ayden's mighty bow and accompanied by her loyal dog Kreeg, the adventurer Gareth and the thief Cassidy, Arwyn now ventures North to Skarnhime, home of the Iskani – the Ice Trolls in search of the Fourth Fragment. Meanwhile, the mysterious mage Pallias is working behind the scenes, covertly contesting Mordath's grip on the Five Lands and – unbeknownst to Arwyn – secretly aiding her endeavours!

Pallias

STORYTELLERS

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Cliff RICHARDS Guest PENCILER

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Andrew CROSSLEY & **Justin THYME** Guest COLORISTS

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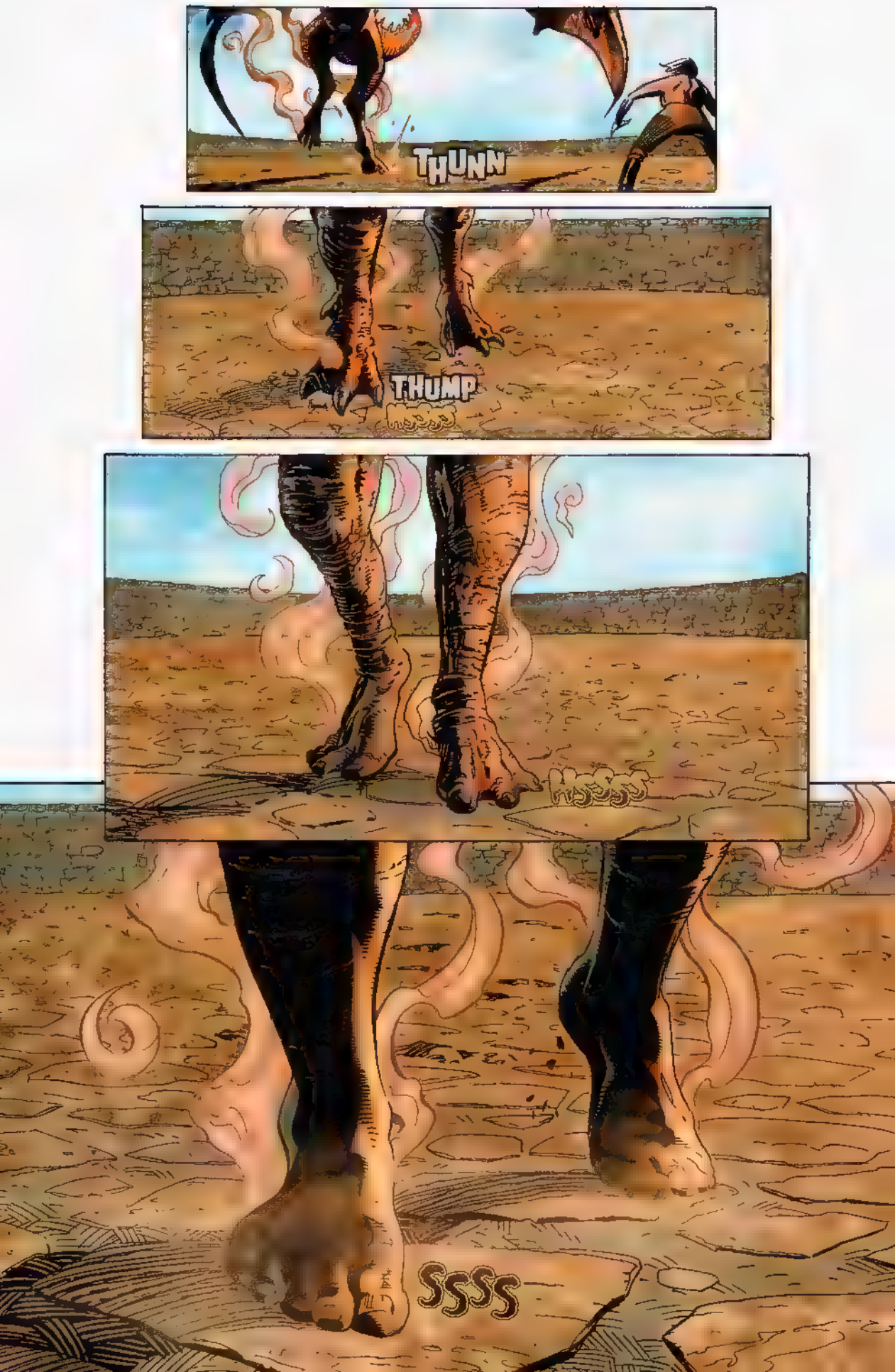
OH, BOY

HHRRAGHH

THIS IS NOT GOOD!


THUNN
THUMP
SSSS

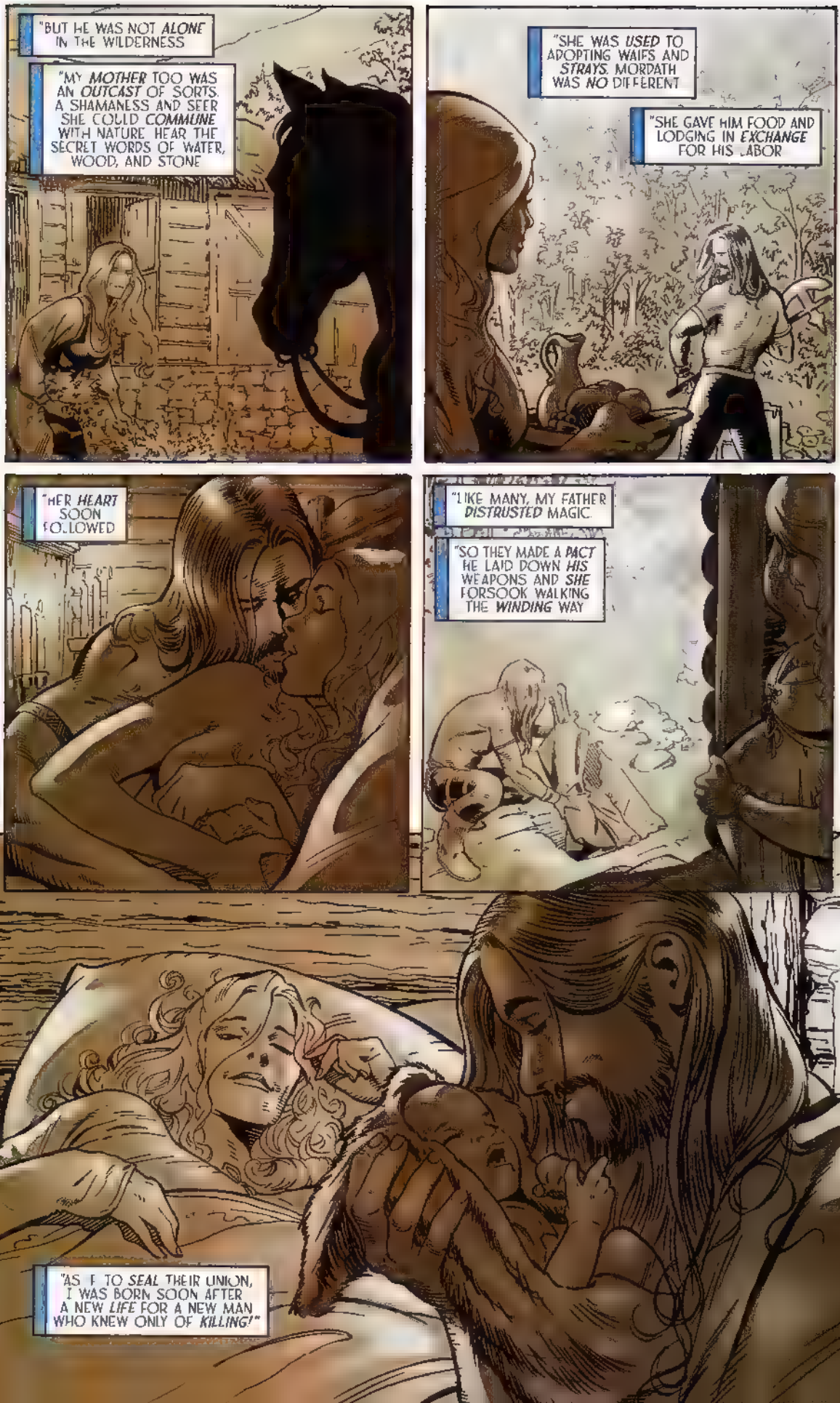
HRRRR
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, *ANOTHER* ROOSTER IN THE HEN HOUSE, RIGHT?
WELL, DON'T WORRY I WAS A *COMPLETE* GENTLEMAN!

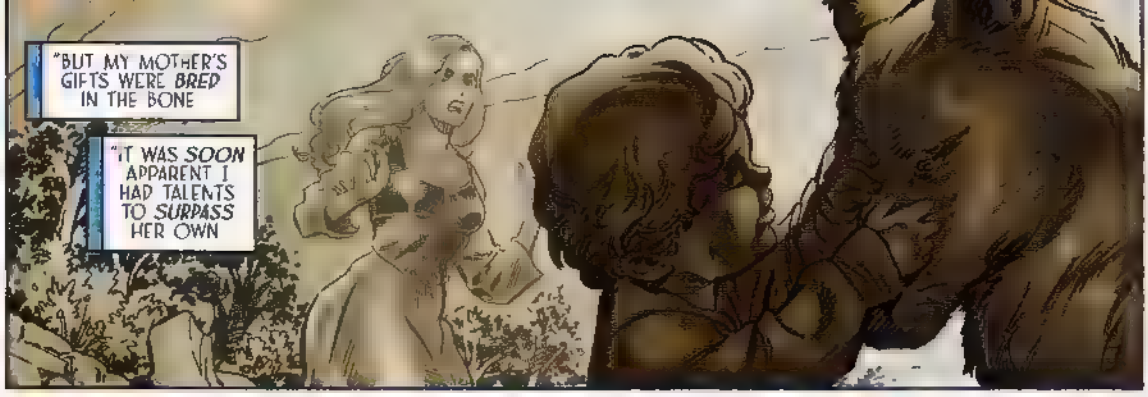
WHUDD
HGRRR
HEY, C'MON! YOU *WOULDN'T* HIT A GUY WITH *ONE* EYE, NOW WOULD YOU?
HRRAGH!
THWACK!
≥UHH≤
SKTASH!

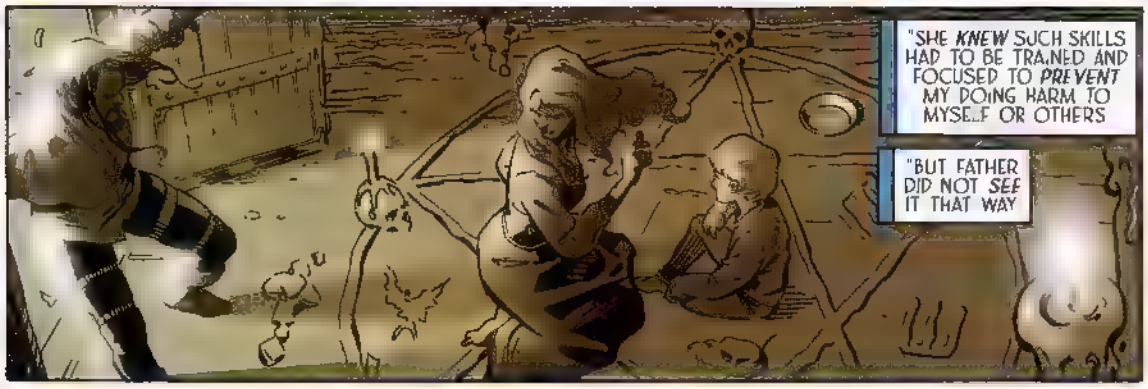
GARETH!!
NHH
HI, CASS
DON'T MIND ME
I'M JUST GOING TO
SLIP QUIETLY INTO
A COMA
NOT
A GOOD
IDEA!
WHAT
HELLO,
LOVER! WON'T
YOU STAY FOR
A BITE?
RUN!
I AM!
WHAT I WANT TO
KNOW IS

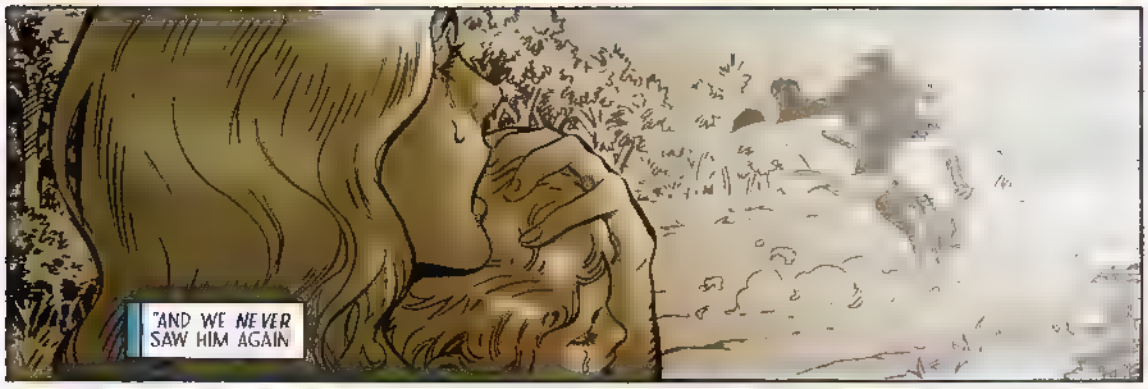
"WHERE THE HELL IS ARWYN?"
WHAT SORCERY IS THIS ?
THE KIND YOU NEED NOT FEAR, ARWYN OF MIDDELYN YOU ARE AMONGST FRIENDS AND ALLIES HERE
I APOLOGIZE FOR EMPLOYING SUCH SHALLOW DECEITS TO BRING YOU HERE, BUT WE ARE IN HIDING AND CANNOT VENTURE SAFELY INTO THE WAKING WORLD
AND WHO EXACTLY MIGHT YOU BE?
TELL ME, WHILE YOU STILL HAVE TEETH IN YOUR HEAD!
I AM CALLED PALLIAS. THIS IS M'LADY DODONA--MY COMPANION AND CONFIDANTE
LIKE YOU, WE SEEK TO PUT AN END TO MORDATH'S REIGN
HOWEVER, MY INTEREST HAS A MORE PERSONAL EDGE SINCE I AM HIS SON!

IMPOSSIBLE! MORDATH'S SON AND WIFE WERE KILLED THREE CENTURIES AGO!
HOW CAN YOU BE HIM?
IN A WORD, MAGIC!
MORE OF MORDATH'S TAINTED TOUCH?
NO, NOT FROM HIM FROM MY MOTHER!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THERE IS MORE THAT PASSES IN THE WORLD THAN IS WRITTEN IN HISTORY BOOKS. THE TRUTH IS OFTEN LOST OR DISTORTED OVER TIME
"MY FATHER WAS A BRUTAL MAN A FREEBOOTER AND MERCENARY
"YET, HE WAS A RARE BEAST, LIVING LONGER THAN MOST IN HIS PROFESSION. HE HAD GROWN WEARY OF THE KILLING AND BLOODSHED
"MEN SUCH AS HE ATTRACT CONFLICT LIKE MOTHS TO A FLAME. SO HE SOUGHT TO LOSE HIMSELF IN THE DARK FOREST ON THE FRINGES OF GRINBOR."

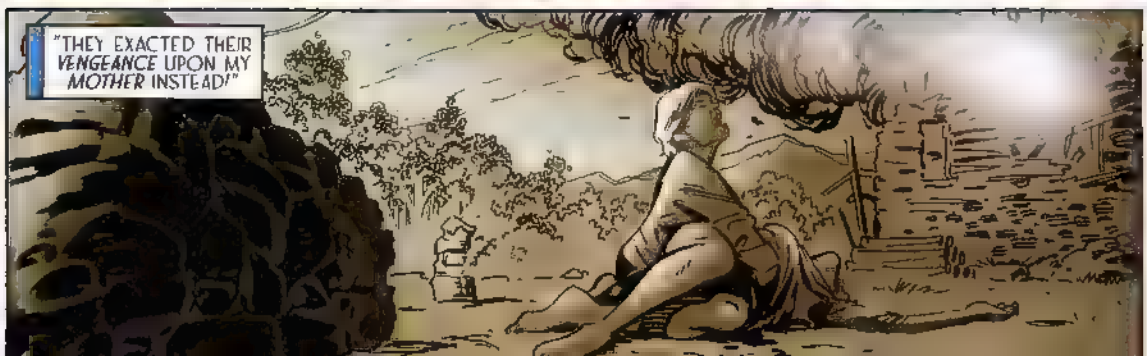

"BUT HE WAS NOT *ALONE* IN THE WILDERNESS
"MY *MOTHER* TOO WAS AN *OUTCAST* OF SORTS. A SHAMANESS AND SEER SHE COULD *COMMUNE* WITH NATURE. HEAR THE SECRET WORDS OF WATER, WOOD, AND STONE
"SHE WAS *USED* TO ADOPTING WAIFS AND *STRAYS*. MORDATH WAS *NO* DIFFERENT
"SHE GAVE HIM FOOD AND LODGING IN *EXCHANGE* FOR HIS LABOR
"HER *HEART* SOON FOLLOWED
"LIKE MANY, MY FATHER *DISTRUSTED* MAGIC.
"SO THEY MADE A *PACT*. HE LAID DOWN *HIS* WEAPONS AND *SHE* FORSOOK WALKING THE *WINDING* WAY
"AS IF TO *SEAL* THEIR UNION, I WAS BORN SOON AFTER. A NEW *LIFE* FOR A NEW MAN WHO KNEW ONLY OF *KILLING!*"

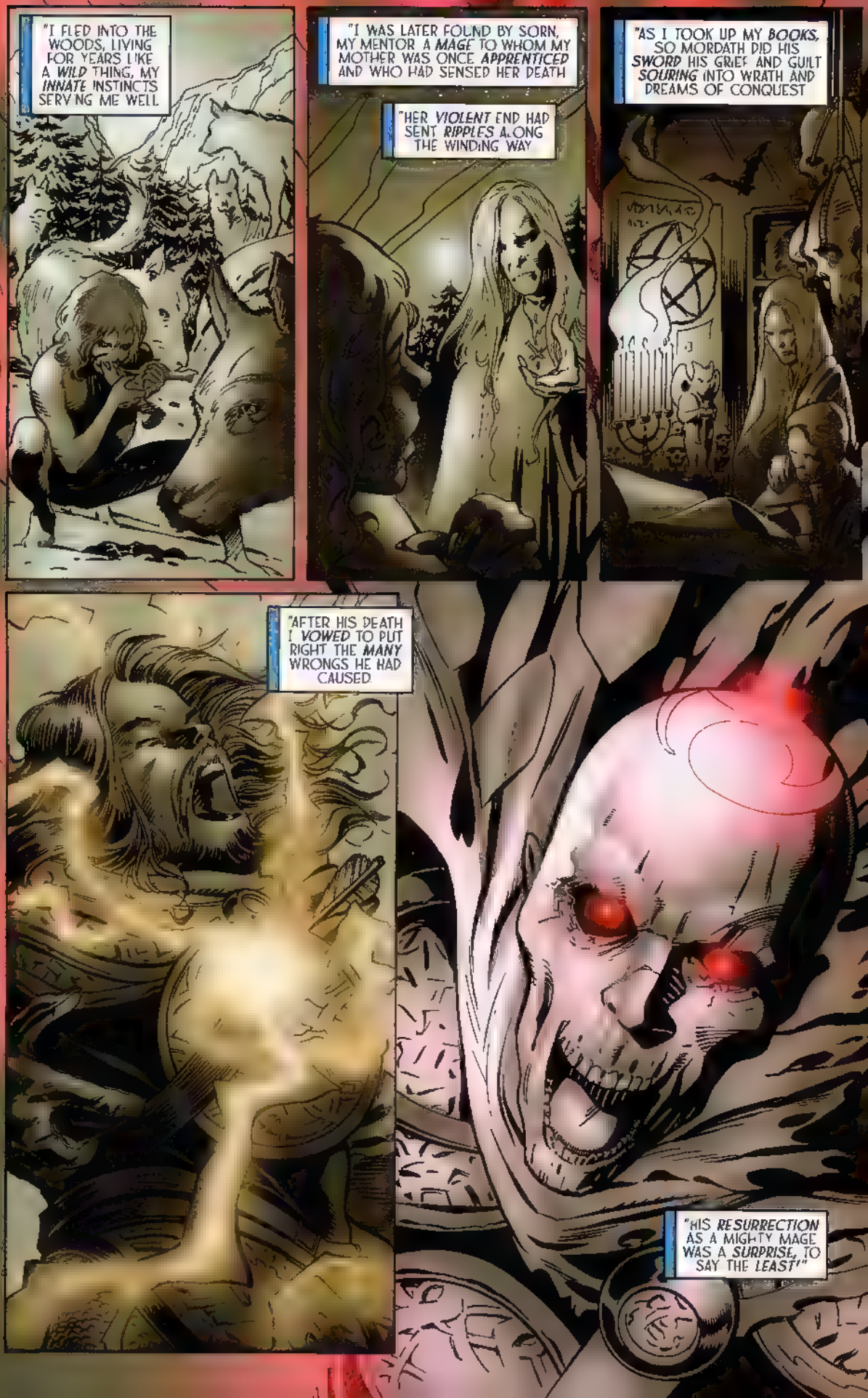

"BUT MY MOTHER'S GIFTS WERE *BRED* IN THE BONE
"IT WAS *SOON* APPARENT I HAD TALENTS TO *SURPASS* HER OWN

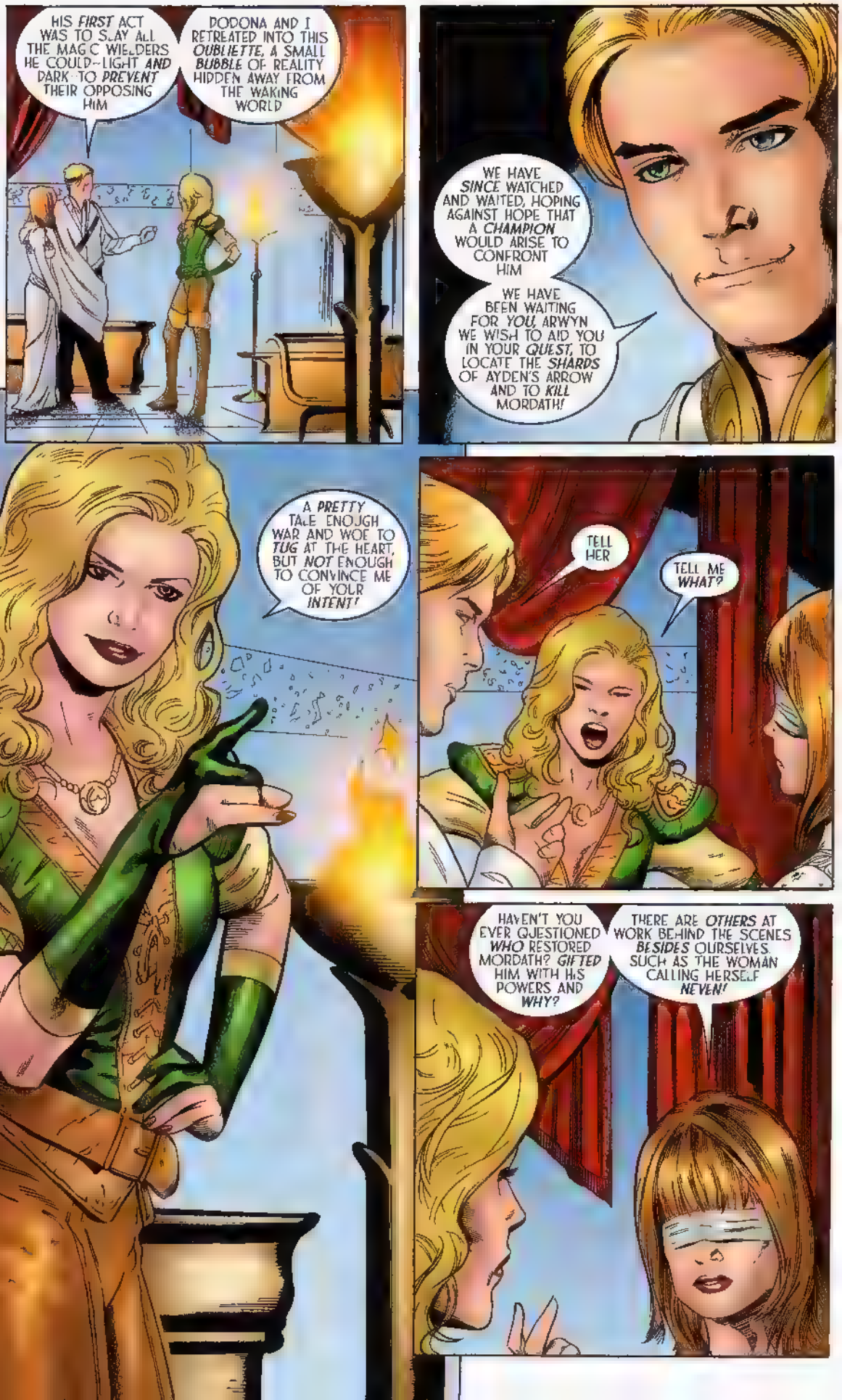

"SHE *KNEW* SUCH SKILLS HAD TO BE TRAINED AND FOCUSED TO *PREVENT* MY DOING HARM TO MYSELF OR OTHERS
"BUT FATHER DID NOT *SEE* IT THAT WAY

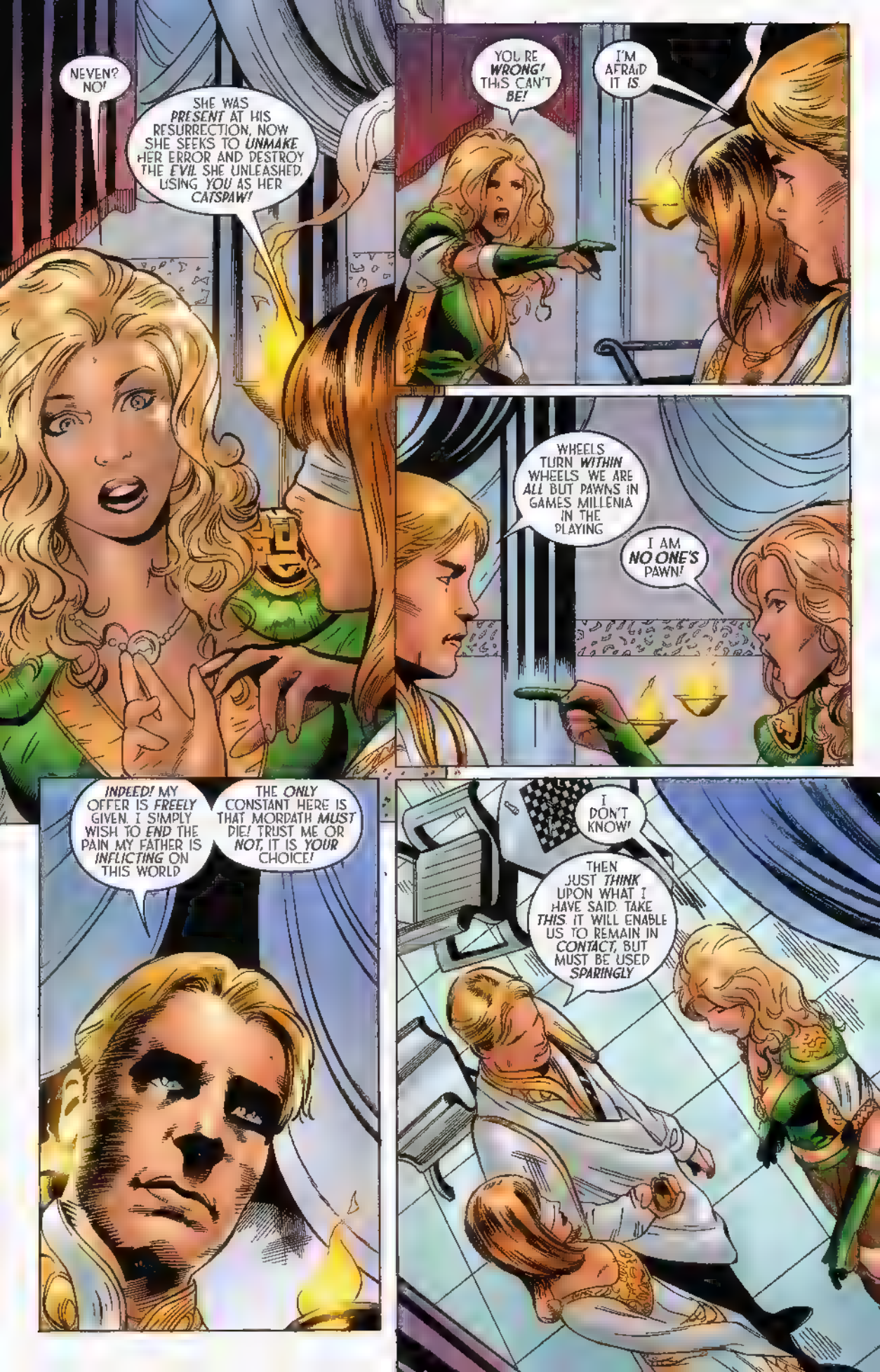

"AND WE *NEVER* SAW HIM AGAIN

"SOON AFTER, MEN CAME--*HUNTING* MY FATHER FORMER *COMRADES* TURNED *ENEMIES* THEY HAD BEEN TRACKING HIM FOR SEVERAL YEARS


"THEY EXACTED THEIR *VENGEANCE* UPON MY *MOTHER* INSTEAD!"


"I FLED INTO THE WOODS, LIVING FOR YEARS LIKE A WILD THING, MY INNATE INSTINCTS SERVING ME WELL
"I WAS LATER FOUND BY SORN, MY MENTOR A MAGE TO WHOM MY MOTHER WAS ONCE APPRENTICED AND WHO HAD SENSED HER DEATH
"HER VIOLENT END HAD SENT RIPPLES ALONG THE WINDING WAY
"AS I TOOK UP MY BOOKS, SO MORDATH DID HIS SWORD HIS GRIEF AND GUILT SOURING INTO WRATH AND DREAMS OF CONQUEST
"AFTER HIS DEATH I VOWED TO PUT RIGHT THE MANY WRONGS HE HAD CAUSED.
"HIS RESURRECTION AS A MIGHTY MAGE WAS A SURPRISE, TO SAY THE LEAST!"


HIS FIRST ACT WAS TO SLAY ALL THE MAGIC WIELDERS HE COULD--LIGHT AND DARK--TO PREVENT THEIR OPPOSING HIM
DODONA AND I RETREATED INTO THIS OUBLIETTE, A SMALL BUBBLE OF REALITY HIDDEN AWAY FROM THE WAKING WORLD
WE HAVE SINCE WATCHED AND WAITED, HOPING AGAINST HOPE THAT A CHAMPION WOULD ARISE TO CONFRONT HIM
WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, ARWYN WE WISH TO AID YOU IN YOUR QUEST, TO LOCATE THE SHARDS OF AYDEN'S ARROW AND TO KILL MORDATH!
A PRETTY TALE ENOUGH WAR AND WOE TO TUG AT THE HEART, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO CONVINCE ME OF YOUR INTENT!
TELL HER
TELL ME WHAT?
HAVEN'T YOU EVER QUESTIONED WHO RESTORED MORDATH? GIFTED HIM WITH HIS POWERS AND WHY?
THERE ARE OTHERS AT WORK BEHIND THE SCENES BESIDES OURSELVES. SUCH AS THE WOMAN CALLING HERSELF NEVEN!


NEVEN? NO!
SHE WAS *PRESENT* AT HIS RESURRECTION, NOW SHE SEEKS TO *UNMAKE* HER ERROR AND DESTROY THE *EVIL* SHE UNLEASHED, USING *YOU* AS HER *CATSPAW!*
YOU'RE *WRONG!* THIS CAN'T *BE!*
I'M AFRAID IT *IS*
WHEELS TURN *WITHIN* WHEELS WE ARE *ALL* BUT PAWNS IN GAMES MILLENIA IN THE PLAYING
I AM *NO ONE'S* PAWN!
INDEED! MY OFFER IS *FREELY* GIVEN. I SIMPLY WISH TO *END* THE PAIN MY FATHER IS *INFLICTING* ON THIS WORLD
THE *ONLY* CONSTANT HERE IS THAT MORDATH *MUST* DIE! TRUST ME OR *NOT*, IT IS *YOUR* CHOICE!
I DON'T KNOW!
THEN JUST *THINK* UPON WHAT I HAVE SAID. TAKE *THIS*. IT WILL ENABLE US TO REMAIN IN *CONTACT*, BUT MUST BE USED *SPARINGLY*

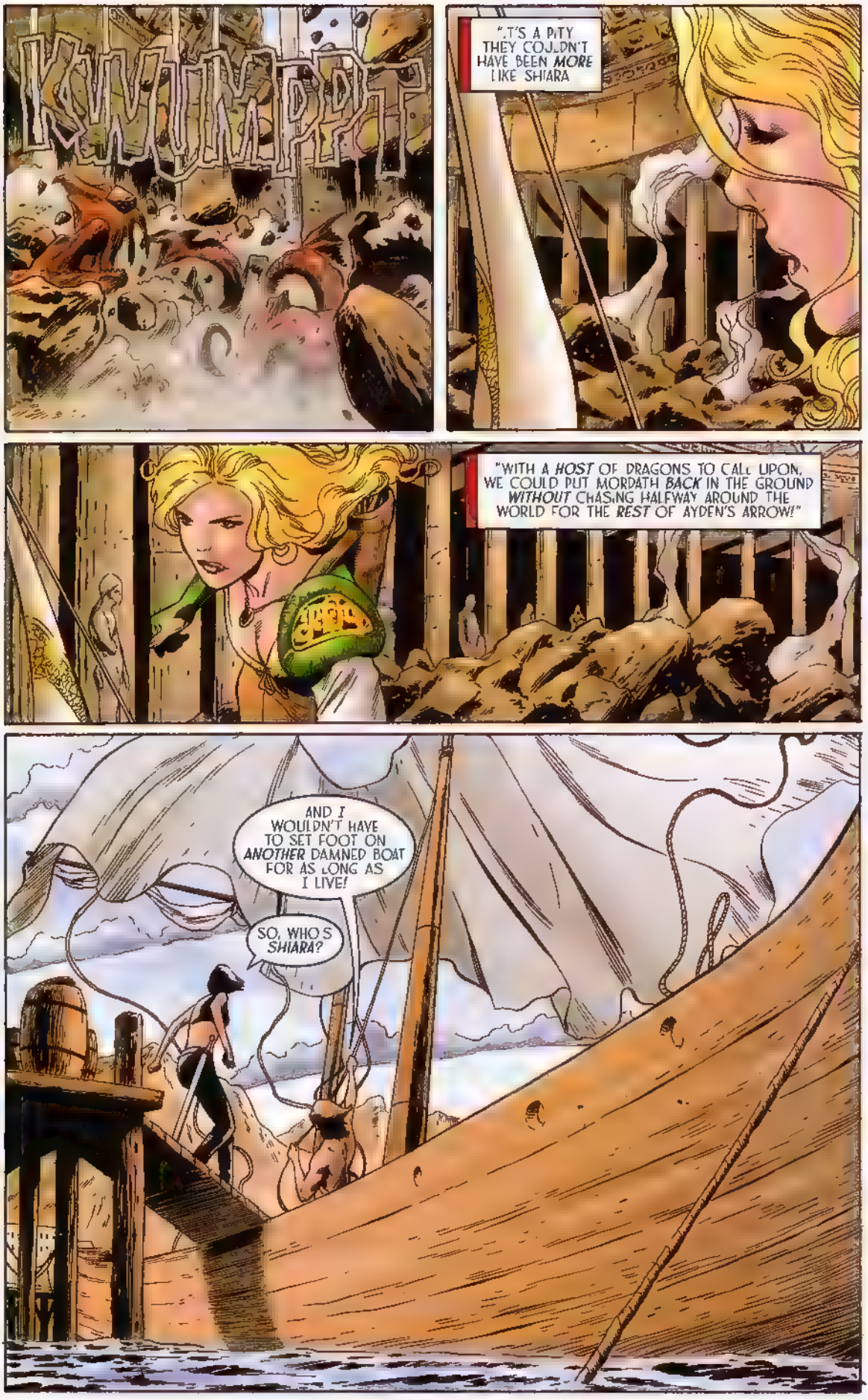
"FOR THE USE OF MAGIC LEAVES A TRACK AND TRAIL ALL ITS OWN."
I THINK WE'VE LOST THEM!
CASSIDY
AWOOSH
GET DOWN!

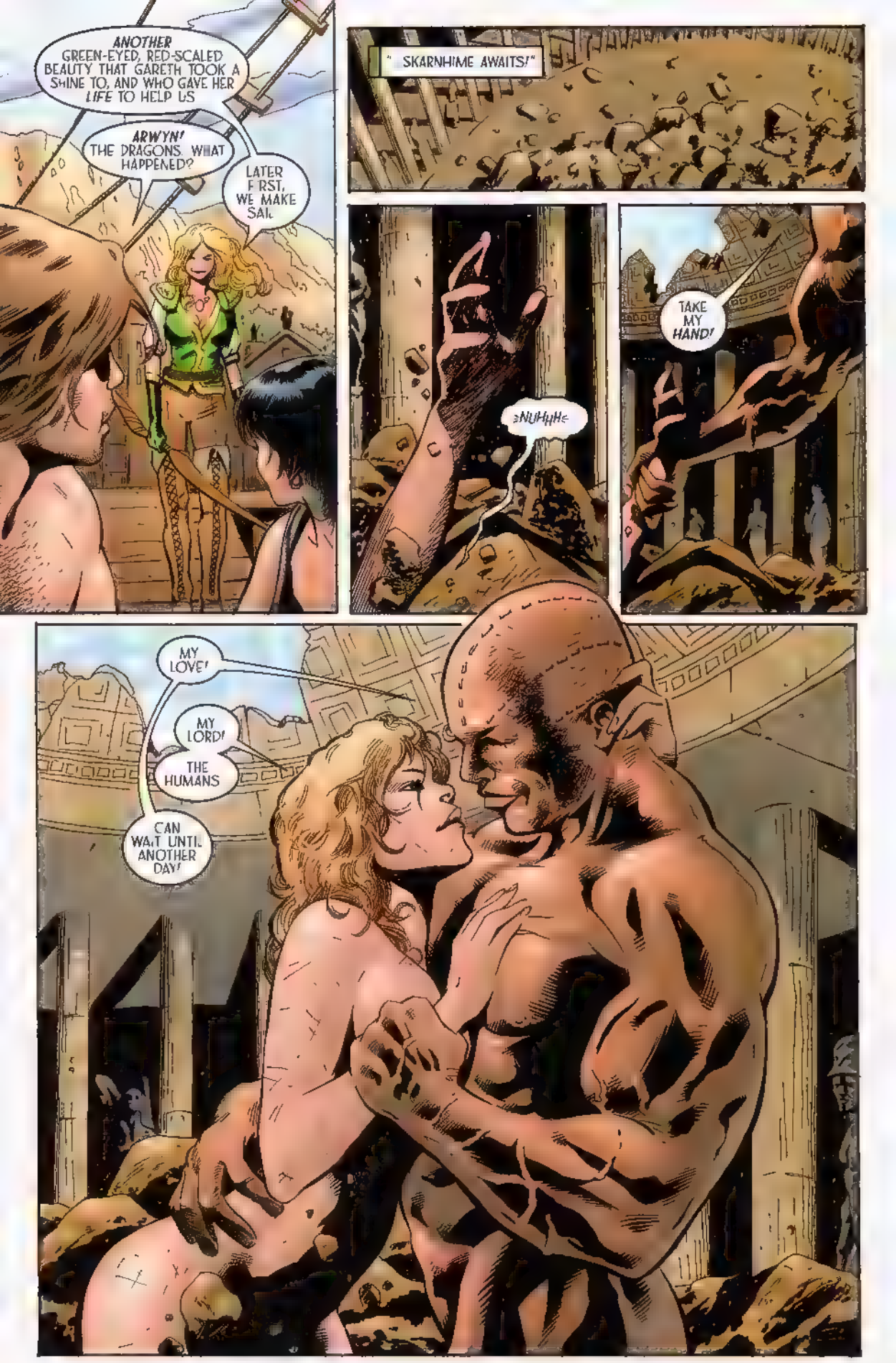
SCREE!!
SHE'S STUCK!
PROBABLY THOSE FAT THIGHS!
I'LL EAT YOUR TONGUE FOR THAT!
KA-THUMM
TOUCHY, ISN'T SHE?
YOU KNOW, CASS, IT REALLY WOULDN'T HURT TO PLAY NICE ONCE IN A WHILE!
C'MON, MAYBE WE CAN LOSE THEM IF WE CUT THROUGH
HERE!

I HATE MY LIFE
YOU!
NYAGH!
KRAKK
GARETH!
=GUHK=
LITTLE HUMAN GIRL
COME
...KISS ME!

GRAAGH!
KA-BOOM
SORRY I'M LATE!
THEY ARE HERE! ALL OF THEM!

THE DOOR BEHIND ME, IT LEADS TO THE QUAY AND THE BOAT WE SAW
TAKE IT, NOW!
I'LL KEEP THESE LADIES OCCUPIED!
AND HOW DO YOU INTEND TO DO THAT?
SHARROOM
BY BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE!


KWUMPPT
"IT'S A PITY THEY COULDN'T HAVE BEEN *MORE* LIKE SHIARA
"WITH A *HOST* OF DRAGONS TO CALL UPON, WE COULD PUT MORDATH *BACK* IN THE GROUND *WITHOUT* CHASING HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD FOR THE *REST* OF AYDEN'S ARROW!"
AND *I* WOULDN'T HAVE TO SET FOOT ON *ANOTHER* DAMNED BOAT FOR AS LONG AS I LIVE!
SO, WHO'S *SHIARA?*


ANOTHER GREEN-EYED, RED-SCALED BEAUTY THAT GARETH TOOK A SHINE TO, AND WHO GAVE HER LIFE TO HELP US
ARWYN! THE DRAGONS. WHAT HAPPENED?
LATER F RST, WE MAKE SAIL
"SKARNHIME AWAITS!"
NUHHHH
TAKE MY HAND!
MY LOVE!
MY LORD!
THE HUMANS
CAN WAIT UNTIL ANOTHER DAY!

THAT WENT WELL, I THOUGHT I DO SO LIKE A HAPPY ENDING!
WAS ANY OF IT TRUE?
BUT NEVEN'S INVOLVEMENT WAS REAL ENOUGH?
YES, BUT IT'S ALL A MATTER OF CONTEXT NEVEN WAS PRESENT AT MORDATH'S RESURRECTION, BUT SHE WAS ACTUALLY AGAINST IT FROM THE START
I JUST HAPPENED TO LEAVE THAT SALIENT FACT OUT OF THE STORY A WORM OF DOUBT NOW GNAWS WITHIN ARWYN
I HAVE POISONED HER TRUST IN HER ONLY ALLY WITH ANY SIGNIFICANT POWER NOW, SHE WILL LOOK TO ME FOR HELP INSTEAD
OF WHAT I TOLD HER? NOT A WORD
A PACK OF LIES FROM START TO FINISH
NOT THAT SHE BELIEVED ME CHAPTER AND VERSE, BUT THE DAMAGE IS DONE SHE WILL COME OVER TO US EVENTUALLY
"AND WHEN SHE'S DESTROYED MORDATH FOR ME, I WILL USE HER TO CLAIM DOMINION OVER QUIN ITSELF!"

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Arwyn

Gareth

Cassidy

Mordath

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Armed with Ayden's mighty bow and accompanied by her loyal dog Kreeg, the adventurer Gareth, and the thief Cassidy, Arwyn now ventures north to Skarnbime, home of the Iskani – the Ice Trolls – in search of the fourth Fragment.

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TORVALD! TORVALD! WHERE *ARE* YOU?
IT IS ME, *SKELD!*
YOUR *WIFE* HAS SENT ME TO FETCH YOU!
COME BACK TO THE *LONGHOUSE*-- THERE IS MEAD AND MUTTON ON THE *TABLE!*
YOUR *BEASTS* CAN TAKE CARE OF *THEMSELVES!*
TORVALD?

GODS OF STONE! WHAT IS THIS?

HRRR

WHO IS THERE?

SHOW YOURSELF!

NO NO! COUSIN!!
HGRRRR
UHHH. NO IT CANNOT BE!
YOU ARE DEAD ALL OF YOU!!

AND I SHALL ALSO PUT YOU IN THE GROUND!
GRAARGHH!!
THUKK
YIIAARGH!
NNNH. NHHGH. NO. NOT LIKE THIS.
HGROAARRR
GAAHHK...

THE WORLD BEYOND THESE WALLS IS *MINE!*

THE *DREAMS* OF CONQUEST THAT *DOMINATED* MY WARM LIFE ARE ALL BUT *FULFILLED*

NOW IT IS TIME TO FEED THE DEMANDS OF MY *GREY* FLESH. TO FEED MY *VENGEANCE!*

I DIED A WARRIOR, BUT WAS *REBORN* A SORCERER, *RESURRECTED* TO PLAY THE VILLAIN SO SOME *CELESTIAL* PURPOSE MAY BE *SERVED*

BUT THEY SHALL SOON TASTE THE *BITTER* TRUTH, THAT I AM *NO ONE'S* PLAYTHING

I AM *MORDATH!*

THE ARCHER *ARWYN* HAS BEEN SET TO TAKE ME TO TASK, QUESTING FOR *AYDEN'S* ARROW WITH WHICH TO *DISPATCH* ME ONCE MORE

YET THERE ARE *THOSE* WHO FEAR *IT* WILL NOT STOP ME *THIS* TIME

HIM FOR EXAMPLE

HIS *LATENT* IMAGE HELD IN THE MIRROR'S *HISTORY* LIKE AN INSECT IN AMBER

HE USED IT TO *COMMUNICATE* WITH HALK, MY AIDE AND WOULD BE *ASSASSIN*

I HAVE HIS *FACE*, NOW ALL I REQUIRE IS A *NAME!*

MY LORD, COMMANDER *BOHR* HAS RETURNED HE HAS THE *FEMALE* WITH HIM

VERY WELL, VOSK THEY MAY ENTER

SIRE
WELL, WELL BOHR YOU'VE FINALLY RETURNED WITH THE WOMAN YOU WERE ORDERED TO!
I'M IN DANGER OF BE NG IMPRESSED!
Oh, I WOULDN'T LET HIM TAKE ALL THE CREDIT MY LORD
ESPECIALLY AS IT WAS I WHO FOUND HIM!
TROLL MALES AREN'T EXACTLY BIG ON PERSONAL HYGIENE I'D CAUGHT HIS STENCH FROM MILES AWAY!
HE'D BEEN TRACKING ME FOR DAYS. I LED HIM A MERRY CHASE UNTIL I GOT BORED AND WAITED FOR HIM TO CATCH UP
HAD I KNOWN HE WAS YOUR CREATURE, I WOULD HAVE RELENTED SOONER!

KNOW YOUR PLACE, WOMAN! KNEEL AND SHOW YOUR RESPECT!
I KNEEL TO NO MAN LIVING OR DEAD!
AND YOUR RESPECT?
IS A GIVEN, LORD MORDATH I MAY BE PROUD, BUT I'M NOT STUPID!
DO YOU KNOW WHY YOU ARE HERE, MY LADY KHIVA?
TO DO WHAT YOUR DOGS COULD NOT BRING YOU THE HUMAN WOMAN, THE ARCHER~ ARWYN
SO, DO YOU WANT HER DEAD OR ALIVE? ALIVE IS EXTRA~I HAVE OVERHEADS.
Oh, DEAD BY ALL MEANS I WOULDN'T WANT TO BURDEN YOU AS PROOF, BRING ONLY HER HEAD
NOW, AS TO YOUR REMUNERATION? WHAT IS YOUR PRICE?

ANKHARA!
WHAT?
I HAVE ASPIRATIONS AND AMBITIONS OF MY OWN, MY LORD I DO NOT INTEND TO BE HUNTING AFTER SCUM FOR COIN ALL MY LIFE
I WANT A LITTLE PLACE OF MY OWN. NOTHING TOO GRAND, JUST A SMALL KINGDOM OWING FEALTY TO YOUR GOOD SELF, OF COURSE!
A KINGDOM FOR A WOMAN'S HEAD! DO YOU TAKE ME FOR A FOOL?
ON THE CONTRARY, BUT HERE IN YOUR HEART OF DARKNESS, YOU SEE LITTLE OF HOW THE WORLD WORKS BEYOND THESE WALLS
WORD IS SPREADING OF HOW ARWYN HAS SLIPPED THROUGH YOUR FINGERS TIME AND AGAIN

YOU HAVE YOUR BOOT ON THE THROATS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE FIVE LANDS, BUT SHE IS WINNING THEIR HEARTS
IN EVERY VILLAGE AND HAMLET, INN AND TAVERN, HER NAME IS SPOKEN IN REVERENT WHISPERS HER DEFIANCE IS GIVING THEM HOPE!
TAKE THAT AWAY FROM THEM AND THEY WILL BECOME BROKEN ONCE AND FOR ALL!
VERY SHREWD. YOU DO INDEED HAVE THE MAKINGS OF A MONARCH!
I AGREE TO YOUR TERMS ON ONE CONDITION
BOHR JOINS YOU!
MY LORD, I
NO! I WORK ALONE!

ENOUGH!!

YOU WILL YIELD TO MY WILL OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES!
MASTER, SHE IS NOT TO BE TRUSTED!
THAT IS WHY YOU WILL BE MY EYES AND EARS TO ENSURE I AM NOT BETRAYED!
SUPPOSING I CHANGE MY MIND ABOUT THIS WHOLE DEAL?
THEN YOU WILL LEAVE THIS ROOM IN A BUCKET!
DO NOT OVERESTIMATE YOUR IMPORTANCE, MY DEAR I HAVE THE PATIENCE OF THE DEAD. HEROES COME AND GO
AND ALL GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT!

"ARE WE THERE YET?"
"NO."
"ARE WE THERE YET?"
"NO!"
ARE WE
HOW MANY MORE TIMES? NO, WE'RE NOT!
JUST CHECKING
ACTUALLY
I THINK WE ARE!

WHERE IS EVERYONE?

PERHAPS THEY HEARD *WE* WERE COMING?

YOU SAY THAT LIKE IT'S A *GOOD* THING

COME ON

HELLO! IS ANYONE HERE?

Uh, ARWYN, *ANNOUNCING* OUR PRESENCE MIGHT *NOT* BE SUCH A GOOD IDEA.

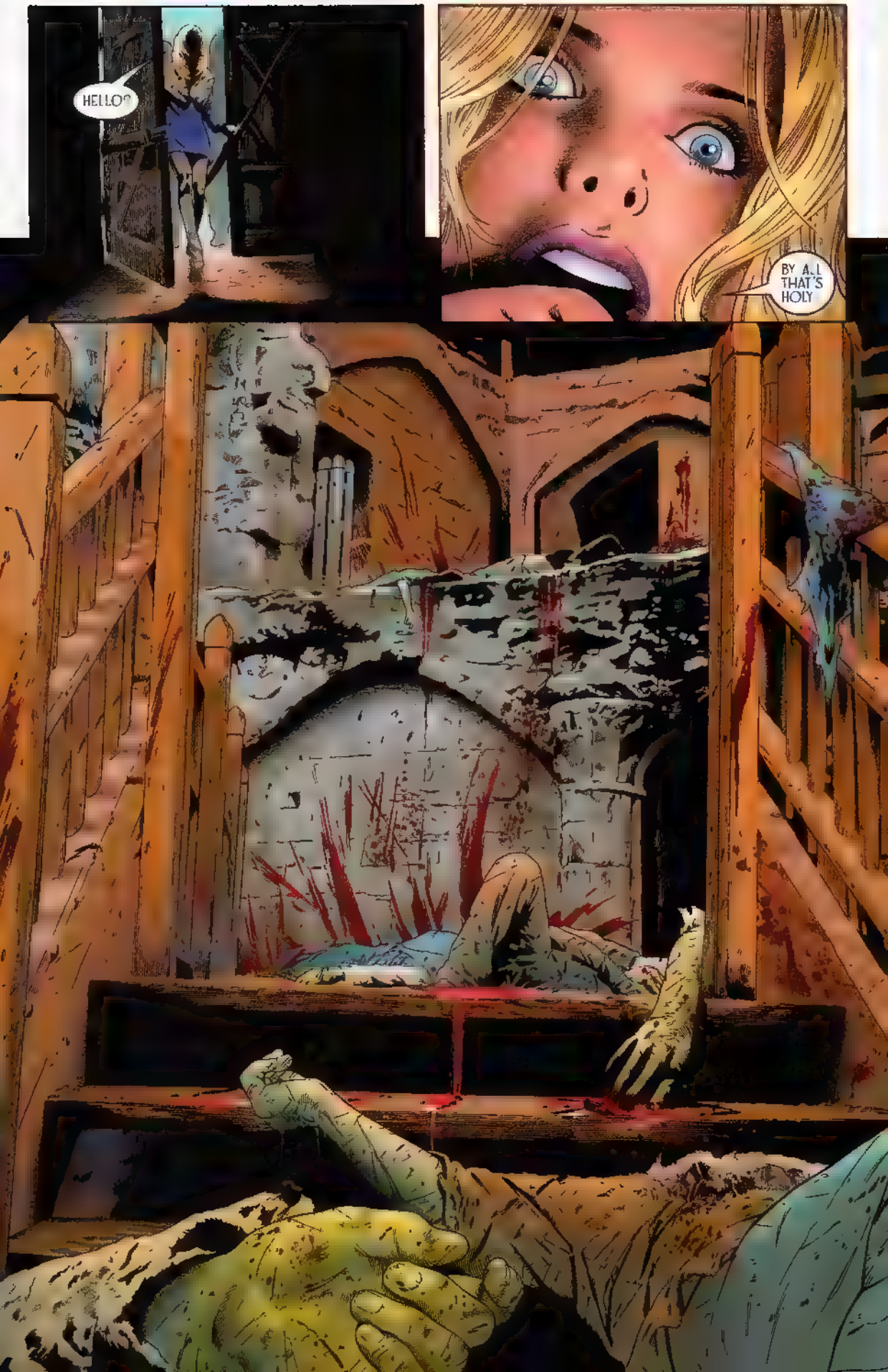
WAIT! LOOK HERE TRACKS, *DOZENS* OF THEM.

MOSTLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN THEY WERE RUNNING

TOWARDS THE LONGHOUSE

SOMETHING *BAD* HAPPENED HERE

PREPARE YOURSELVES


HELLO?
BY ALL THAT'S HOLY

THE DOOR WAS BARRED AND BRACED, YET IT STILL DIDN'T HOLD
THEY THOUGHT THEY'D BE SAFE IN HERE INSTEAD, THEY WERE CORNERED TRAPPED
IT WAS A SLAUGHTER

IT WAS NO BATTERING RAM THAT DID THIS THE TIMBER'S SPLINTERED SHREDDED
AND THIS LOOKS LIKE FUR?

THIS BLOOD'S ALMOST FRESH AN HOUR OLD, TWO, AT MOST

LOOK AT *THIS!*
IS IT A *TROLL* TRACK?
NO LEASTWAYS, NONE THAT I *KNOW* OF
WE SHOULD GO THERE'S *NOTHING* WE CAN DO FOR THESE POOR SOULS
ARWYN, WE HAVE *COMPANY*
ARE THEY *ALL* DEAD?

THEY ARE
HRRAAAGGH!!
GUSTAVUS, WHAT
BY THE GODS NO NO!!!
HUMANS! HUMANS ARE HERE!
THEY DID THIS!

STAND FAST! THEY ARE *NOT* THE CAUSE, AS WELL YOU *KNOW!*
I'M *MORE* READY TO BELIEVE THAT THE *HUMANS* ARE RESPONSIBLE THAN SOME *BEAST* NO ONE'S SEEN HIDE NOR HAIR OF IN THREE HUNDRED YEARS!
I *DON'T* LIKE THE WAY THIS IS *GOING*
THEN DON'T MAKE IT ANY *WORSE* BY REACHING FOR YOUR WEAPONS. LET'S TRY A LITTLE *DIPLOMACY* INSTEAD OF SWORDPLAY
EXCUSE ME, BUT I THINK THERE'S *SOMETHING* HERE YOU SHOULD SEE
THERE! YOU WANT *PROOF*, WHAT DO YOU CALL *THAT?*

WITCHCRAFT! THEY SUMMONED THE BEAST TO DO THEIR BIDDING, THEN MAGICKED IT AWAY AGAIN.
THAT'S WHY THEY HAVE NO BLOOD ON THEM!
GNNHH
MY APOLOGIES FOR THAT HE IS A GOOD TROLL, BUT GRIEF HAS MOMENTARILY STOLEN HIS WITS.
WE SHOULD LEAVE BEFORE WE'RE THE CAUSE OF ANY MORE DISTRESS WE HAVE DUTIES OF OUR OWN TO ATTEND TO
ARWYN?
I WOULD NOT ADVISE IT YOU ARE MARKED NOW AS ARE WE ALL
MARKED?

THE BEAST IS NOT A *NATURAL* CREATURE OF THE WILD. IT IS QUICK AND *CUNNING*. IT PURPOSEFULLY DREW US FROM THE VILLAGE SO IT COULD *PREY* ON THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN
SOON, IT WILL TURN ON *US*. AND *YOU*.
"IT HAS YOUR *SCENT* NOW. IT WILL *HUNT* YOU UNTIL IT CATCHES AND *KILLS* YOU. IT *NEVER* GIVES UP.
"TRUTH BE TOLD, IT IS MOST LIKELY *WATCHING* US, WAITING FOR THE RIGHT TIME TO STRIKE.
"IT IS *WAR* MADE FLESH -THE LAST OF THE *BERSERKERS!*"

Sojourn®

Ian Edginton
Greg Land
Matt Ryan
Justin Ponsor

CrossGen
#32 MAR 2004

Arwyn

Gareth

Cassidy

Mordath

Previously In Sojourn

The dread warlord Mordath was slain more than three centuries ago, shot by an arrow by the legendary warrior Ayden. Before retreating to his valued solitude, Ayden broke the fatal arrow that slew Mordath into Five Fragments and scattered them throughout Quin's Five Lands. Should anyone unite the fragments, Ayden vowed, he would return and lend aid.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb and again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not. Armed with Ayden's mighty bow, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments and destroy Mordath.

Having captured three of the Fragments, and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and the thief Cassidy, Arwyn has ventured north to Skarnhime, home of the Ice Trolls known as the Iskani. There, our heroes stumble upon a chilling scene: a vengeful beast called The Berserker has slaughtered an Iskani village and has targeted our trio for death.

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LO, THERE DO I SEE MY FATHER AND BROTHERS!
LO, THERE DO I SEE MY MOTHER AND SISTERS!
LO, THERE DO I SEE MY MOTHER AND SISTERS!
THERE DO I SEE THE LINE OF MY PEOPLE REACHING BACK TO THE BEGINNING!!
THEY DO CALL TO ME TO TAKE MY PLACE BESIDE THEM IN THE GREAT HALL OF THE KINGS
" WHERE THE HONORED DEAD MAY DWELL FOREVERMORE!"

IT IS DONE.

AREN'T YOU CONCERNED THAT THE FIRE WILL *DESTROY* THE VILLAGE?

NO ONLY *DEATH* LIVES HERE NOW

WHAT WILL *YOU* DO NOW?

WE HAVE ALMOST A *FULL* DAY'S LIGHT--WE SHALL HUNT THE BEAST FOR COME *NIGHTFALL*, IT WILL SURELY *PREY* UPON US!

WHY DON'T YOU JUST *LEAVE*? GO *FAR* FROM THIS PLACE?

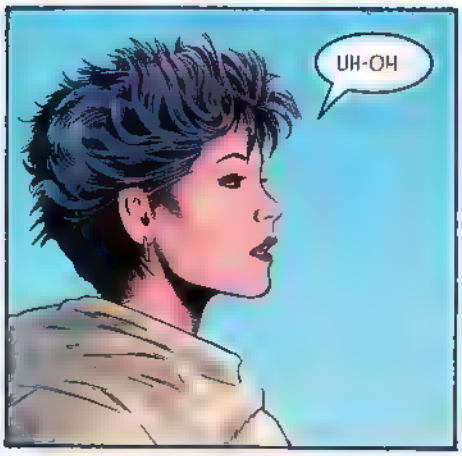
BECAUSE THAT IS *NOT* THE *ISKANI* WAY

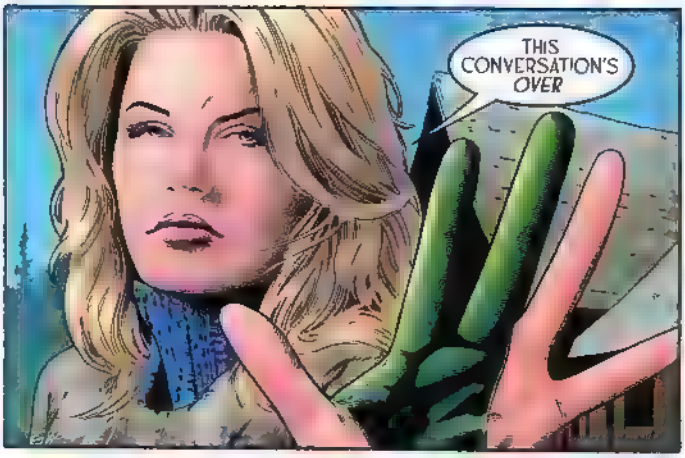
RUN AND *HIDE* IF YOU LIKE THE SKEIN OF *YOUR* LIFE WAS WOVEN *LONG* AGO. IT AVAILS NEITHER TROLL NOR MAN AUGHT TO *FEAR* DEATH

IT IS HOW YOU HAVE *LIVED* THAT WILL *ENDURE*!

WE WISH YOU WELL ON YOUR HUNT, BUT *OUR* FATE LIES *ELSEWHERE*
IF THAT IS YOUR *CHOICE* SO BE IT
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE *BERSERKER*? WHAT ABOUT *THEM*?
WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE THEM TO FACE CERTAIN *DEATH*. WE'RE *PART* OF THIS NOW!
NO, WE'RE *NOT THEIR* KIND CAN TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES
"THEIR KIND"? IS THAT WHAT THIS IS *REALLY* ALL ABOUT?
DON'T YOU *DARE* JUDGE ME!
WHY? BECAUSE YOU THINK YOU'RE THE *ONLY* ONE IN THE FIVE LANDS WHO HAS AN AXE TO GRIND WITH MORDATH?
OR BECAUSE YOU'RE THE *CHOSEN ONE* WHO HAS TO FIND THE SHARDS OF *AYDEN'S* ARROW TO KILL HIM WITH?

HUH?


UH-OH


THIS CONVERSATION'S *OVER*

COMING?
NO

CASSIDY?
I'M SORRY BUT *NO*

IS IT TRUE? ARE YOU THE ARCHER I'VE HEARD OF?
YOU CARRY AYDEN'S BOW? YOU QUEST FOR THE ARROW THAT WILL SEE THE END OF MORDATH?
I DO
THEN MAY GODS GRANT YOU SPEED AND GOOD FORTUNE.
WE WILL FIGHT TO THE LAST TO PREVENT THE BERSERKER PURSUING YOU. YOUR GOAL IS GREATER THAN ANY ONE OF US.
TO RID THIS WORLD OF THE TYRANT WE WOULD ALL READILY GIVE OUR LIVES.
I DID SAY "CHOSEN ONE," DIDN'T I?
UH-HUH
GOOD HUNTING, ARCHER!
MAYHAPS WE WILL MEET IN ANOTHER LIFE!
DAMN!

"I HAVE A QUESTION"
THEN KEEP IT *BEHIND* YOUR TEETH ALONG WITH YOUR *FORKED* TONGUE!
WHY DO YOU *DO* IT?
DO *WHAT?*
FOLLOW HIM, LIKE A *HUNTING* HOUND RUNNING TO ITS *MASTER'S* HEEL. HE IS--OR *WAS*-- ONLY A *HUMAN!*
WHY DO YOU ASK QUESTIONS TO WHICH YOU *ALREADY* KNOW THE ANSWER?
BUT DON'T YOU THINK IT'S *IRONIC* THAT WE LET A VENGEFUL *OUTCAST* HUMAN USE US TO WAGE WAR ON HIS OWN KIND?
TO LIVE AND DIE AT *HIS* COMMAND WHILE SETTING HIMSELF UP AS OUR *UNCONTESTED* MONARCH...OUR *MESSIAH?* NOT ONCE BUT *TWICE?*
HE'S EITHER A *GENIUS* OR THE *GREATEST* CON ARTIST *EVER!*
WATCH YOUR *MOUTH!*
OR YOU'LL DO *WHAT?*

GHRRR
THERE'S A GOOD BOY!
SHALL WE?
DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING?
THE ONE PLACE LEFT IN THE FIVE LANDS WHERE THE ARCHER HASN'T YET ELUDED YOU NORTH TO SKARNHIME!
THEY ARE AWAY?
YES, LORD
GOOD BRING ME MY HORSE I AM LEAVING

"WELL, THERE'S NO DENYING IT CAME THIS WAY IT'S NOT EVEN TRYING TO CONCEAL ITS TRACKS!"
BECAUSE IT DOES NOT NEED TO! IT DOES NOT FEAR US IT WAS NEVER MEANT TO
WHAT NATURE OF BEAST IS THIS BERSERKER EXACTLY?
IT IS A HATE FROM THE OLD DAYS
GUSTAVUS, NO! IT IS NOT MEANT FOR THEIR KIND TO KNOW!
IT MAY WELL BE THEIR DEATH! THEY HAVE EARNED THE RIGHT TO KNOW WHAT FATE THEY FACE!
IT IS OUR WEAKNESS, OUR SHAME IT IS ONE OF US AN ISKAN!

HAVE YOU NOT *WONDERED* WHY IT IS THE ISKANI NEVER FOUGHT *ALONGSIDE* MORDATH AND OUR COUSINS THREE CENTURIES AGO?
IT IS BECAUSE OF THE HOLD HE HAD OVER US. BECAUSE OF THE *BERSERKERS!*
WHAT? HE USED THEM TO KEEP *WATCH* OVER YOU?
NO. NO. NOT *OVER* US! THEY *WERE* US!
JUST NOD AND GO "UH-HUH" IT'S EASIER
AS WITH MOST WOE AND WORRY IN THIS WORLD, IT HAS ITS ORIGIN WITH *MORDATH* AND HIS WITCH MARTA!
MARTA? WASN'T SHE THE TROLL HEALER WHO COUNSELLED THAT MORDATH BE SPARED WHEN HE WAS FOUND IN *GRINBOR* FOREST?
YES, THAT IS SO! YOU ARE AN *EXTRAORDINARY* WOMEN TO KNOW SUCH DETAILS. BUT MARTA WAS NO MERE *HEALER*

"SHE WAS A WITCH A SORCERESS. A *KINGMAKER!*
"SHE WAS OLD AND SLY AND *CUNNING*. SOME SAY SHE WAS *YOUNG* WHEN THE GREAT *GOD OAKS* WERE *SAPLINGS* IN THEIR GLADES.
"SHE SAVED MORDATH'S LIFE FOR A *PURPOSE!* SHE FORESAW THAT *HE* COULD DO WHAT *TROLLS* COULD NOT
"SHE WOULD USE HIS *LOATHING* OF HIS OWN RACE AS A BEACON TO UNITE OUR DISPARATE CLANS FOCUSING THEIR *MUTUAL* RAGE AND REVENGE AGAINST THE HUMANS WHO HAD ABUSED THEM ALL *FAR* TOO LONG"

"SHE TUTORED MORDATH IN THE *WAYS* OF TROLL LORE. HOW TO WIN THE CLAN LORDS' HONOR AND RESPECT. BUT THAT WAS NOT *ALL*.
"SHE HAD *POWERS*, MORE THAN THAT WHICH COMES FROM HERBS AND POTIONS. IT IS SAID SHE HAD *TALISMANS* CRAFTED FROM THE *MOON METAL* WHEN IT FELL FROM THE SKY LONG YEARS AGO.
"IT IS SAID *THAT* WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR HER *UNNATURAL* LONG LIFE. LONG EVEN COMPARED TO THAT OF THE TROLLS.
"SHE USED THESE *OTHERWORLDLY* POWERS *AGAINST* US.
"WE SAW THIS UPRISING WAS *ILL-ADVISED* TAKING ON NOT ONLY THE HUMANS BUT THE *ANKHARANS* AND *URNETHI* ALSO--IT WAS *FOLLY!* NOT TO MENTION IT WAS DONE WITH A *HUMAN* AS OUR LEADER.
"TO QUELL OUR FEARS, MORDATH CALLED A COUNCIL OF OUR *HIGH KING VORTIGEN* AND HIS STEWARDS.
"LITTLE DID THEY KNOW WHAT *TREACHERY* AWAITED.
MORDATH FEARED THAT IF THEY DID *NOT* STAND *WITH* HIM, THE ISKANI MIGHT AT SOME POINT TAKE ARMS *AGAINST* HIM. A PROSPECT HE WOULD *NOT* BROOK."

"AFTER THE HIGH KING AND HIS STEWARDS *REFUSED* HIS FINAL OFFER--AS HE KNEW THEY WOULD--THE TRAP WAS *SPRUNG!*
"THEIR DRINK HAD BEEN *TAINTED* BY AN ELIXIR OF MARTA'S CONCOCTION. IF THEY DID NOT RECIEVE THE *ANTIDOTE* ONCE A MONTH, THEY WOULD BECOME *RAVENING* BEASTS--*BERSERKERS*--LAYING WASTE TO ALL LIFE AROUND THEM.'
"ONCE A *MONTH* MORDATH'S RIDERS WOULD DELIVER THE ELIXIR TO THE *STEWARD* OF EACH PROVINCE. SHOULD THEY *DECEIVE* OR *BETRAY* HIM, IT WOULD *NOT* ARRIVE AND THEY WOULD SUFFER THE *CONSEQUENCES*.
"NATURALLY THEY DID NOT *BELIEVE* SUCH A *FANTASY*. NEVERTHELESS, MORDATH GAVE THEM THE *FIRST* MONTH'S VIAL IN ADVANCE AS AN ACT OF GOOD FAITH
"*SOME* TOOK THEM. SOME DID *NOT*."

"THOSE THAT DID NOT WERE *NEVER* HEARD FROM AGAIN
"WE *YIELDED* TO MORDATH'S WILL AND HUNTED DOWN THOSE BERSERKERS LEST THEY COME FOR *US*."
WE *WANTED* MORDATH'S WAR TO FAIL BUT *DREADED* IT ALSO.
WHEN WORD OF MORDATH'S *DEATH* CAME, THE KING VORTIGEN SUMMONED HIS STEWARDS TO HIM.
SINCE NO *CURE* COULD BE FOUND, THE KING DECREED THAT HE AND HIS STEWARDS WOULD *GIVE* THEIR LIVES TO *SAVE* MANY MORE.
MOST FELL UPON THEIR SWORDS.

MOST?
AYE OTHERS PUT *THEMSELVES* ABOVE THEIR DUTY AND FLED INTO THE WILD TO LIVE AS MADDENED *BEASTS*
THE KING *ANTICIPATED* SUCH WEAKNESS AND COMMISSIONED A BAND OF LOYAL GUARD TO HUNT DOWN THIS *TRAITOROUS* QUARRY
I AM ALL THAT REMAINS OF THAT *GOOD* COMPANY
YOU'RE *THREE HUNDRED* YEARS OLD?
TRY *FIVE*, BOY I PUT IT DOWN TO CLEAN LIVING AND EXERCISE! *HA!*
HOW MANY BERSERKERS ARE *LEFT?*
JUST THIS *ONE* NOW BUT HE IS THE *MIGHTIEST* OF THEM ALL
HOLD! MAKE NO *MOVE* NOR *SOUND!*

THE TRACKS END *HERE!*

BUT *HOW?* IT CANNOT *FLY* CAN IT?

NO

GYAAARGH!

BUT IT CAN *DIG!*

BROAARGHH

WHUMP
NO. IT CANNOT BE! NOT LIKE THIS!
KEEP YOUR NERVE! STAY CLOSE. STAY TOGETHER!
THURIN, WAIT!
NO! NO!
KVOLD! STAND FAST. YOU CANNOT HELP HIM NOW!
GIIAAH!

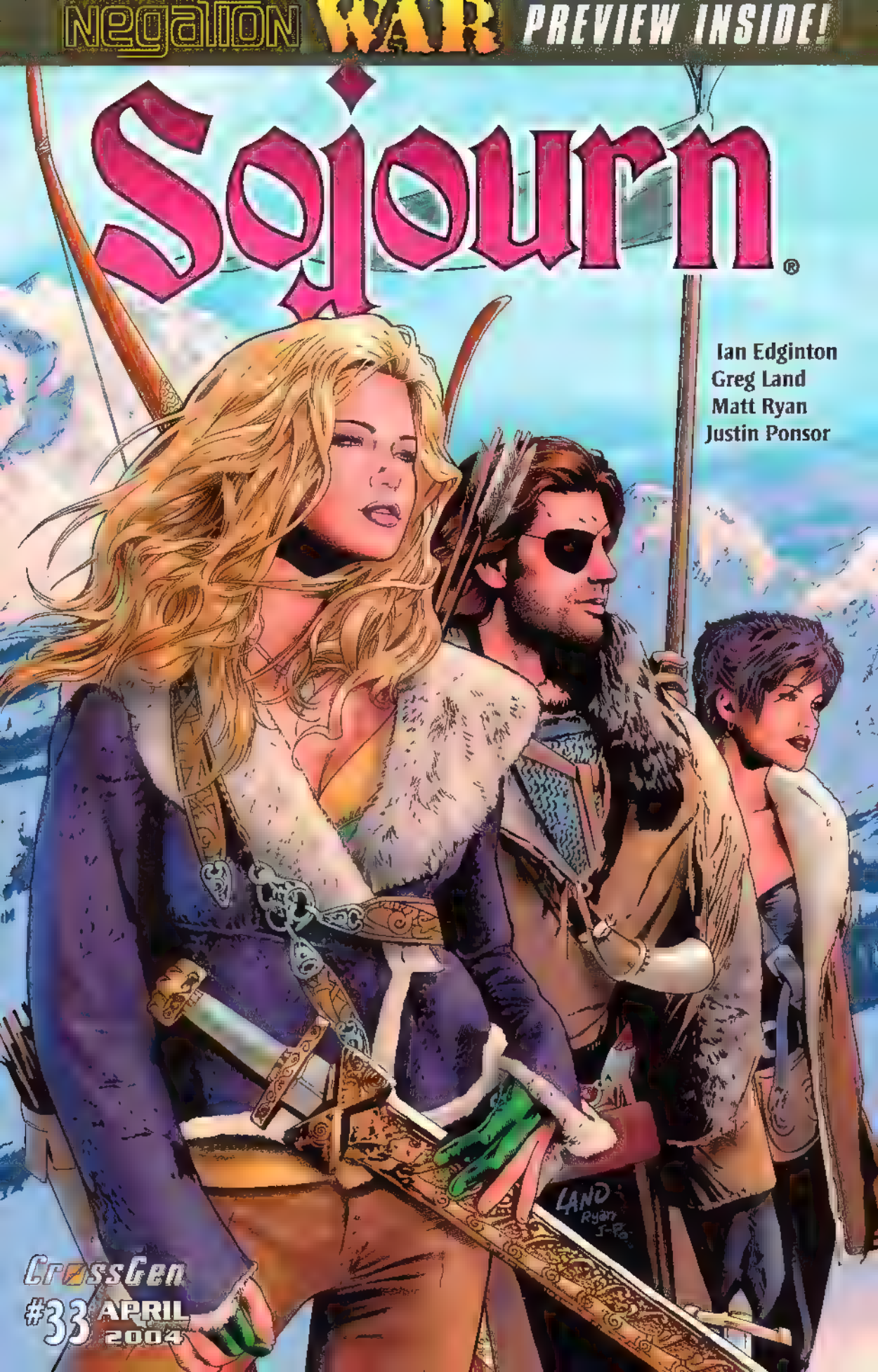
THIS WILL GO BADLY

GRAAARGH!!

DIE, FIEND!!
SHUNK
WHUDD
GUHH
RAARRRG

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS!
STAND CLEAR!
FASHOOM
KRRAA!!
NOW CAN WE LEAVE?
Uhh, DON'T ASK ME

" ASK HIM!"
HGRRRRRR


Negation WAR PREVIEW INSIDE!
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LAND
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J-Po
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Arwyn

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Mordath

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Now Mordath has risen from his tomb and again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not. Armed with Ayden's mighty bow, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments and destroy Mordath.

Having captured three of the Fragments, and accompanied by the adventurer Gareth and the thief Cassidy, Arwyn has ventured north to Skarnhime, home of the Ice Trolls known as the Iskani. There, our heroes and an Iskani hunting party have come under attack by a vengeful beast called The Berserker...an unstoppable monster created by Mordath himself.

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HRRAAARGHH!!

KRRAAGHH!!!

GET CLOSER! GET IN UNDER ITS REACH!

CLOSER?!

AYE. THERE'S NAUGHT BUT BONE BENEATH THAT FUR EXCEPT UNDER THE ARM. STRIKE DEEP. YOU'LL HIT ITS HEART

HAH!

HRRIEFE!

RUNTCH

WELL MOSTLY!

GUSTAVUS! PULL YOUR WARRIORS BACK BEHIND ME, NOW!
YOU HEARD HER! GET BACK! ALL OF YOU!
ARWYN, YOU'RE TOO CLOSE! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
FINISHING WHAT I STARTED! WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS!
HO THERE, HEARTH RUG! I HAVE WORK TO DO AND YOU'RE IN MY WAY!
COME, DO YOUR WORST!

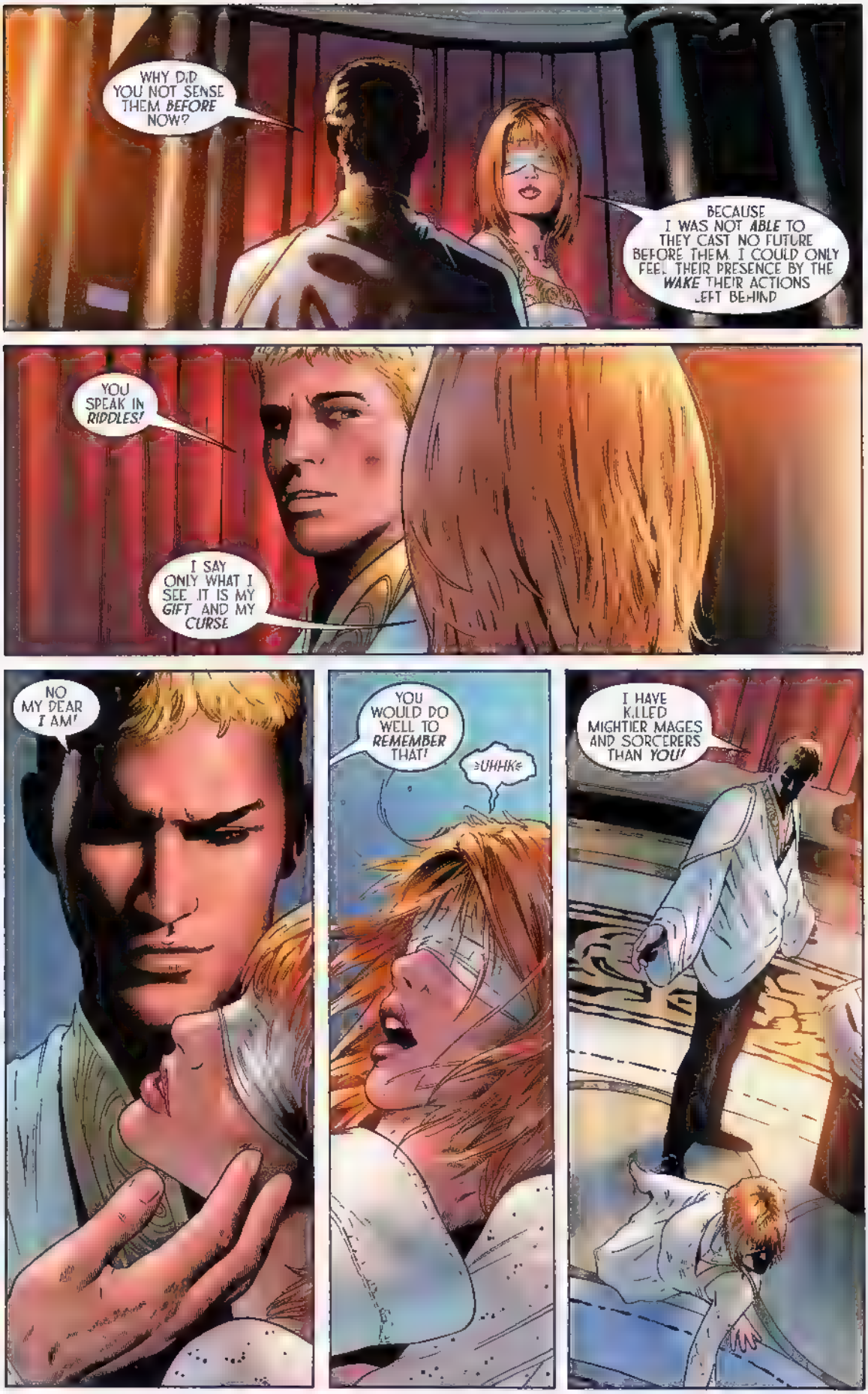
HOOARRAGH!!
THIS TIME YOU STAY DOWN
HRRR
SHIFF
Oh.
ARWYN! RUN!

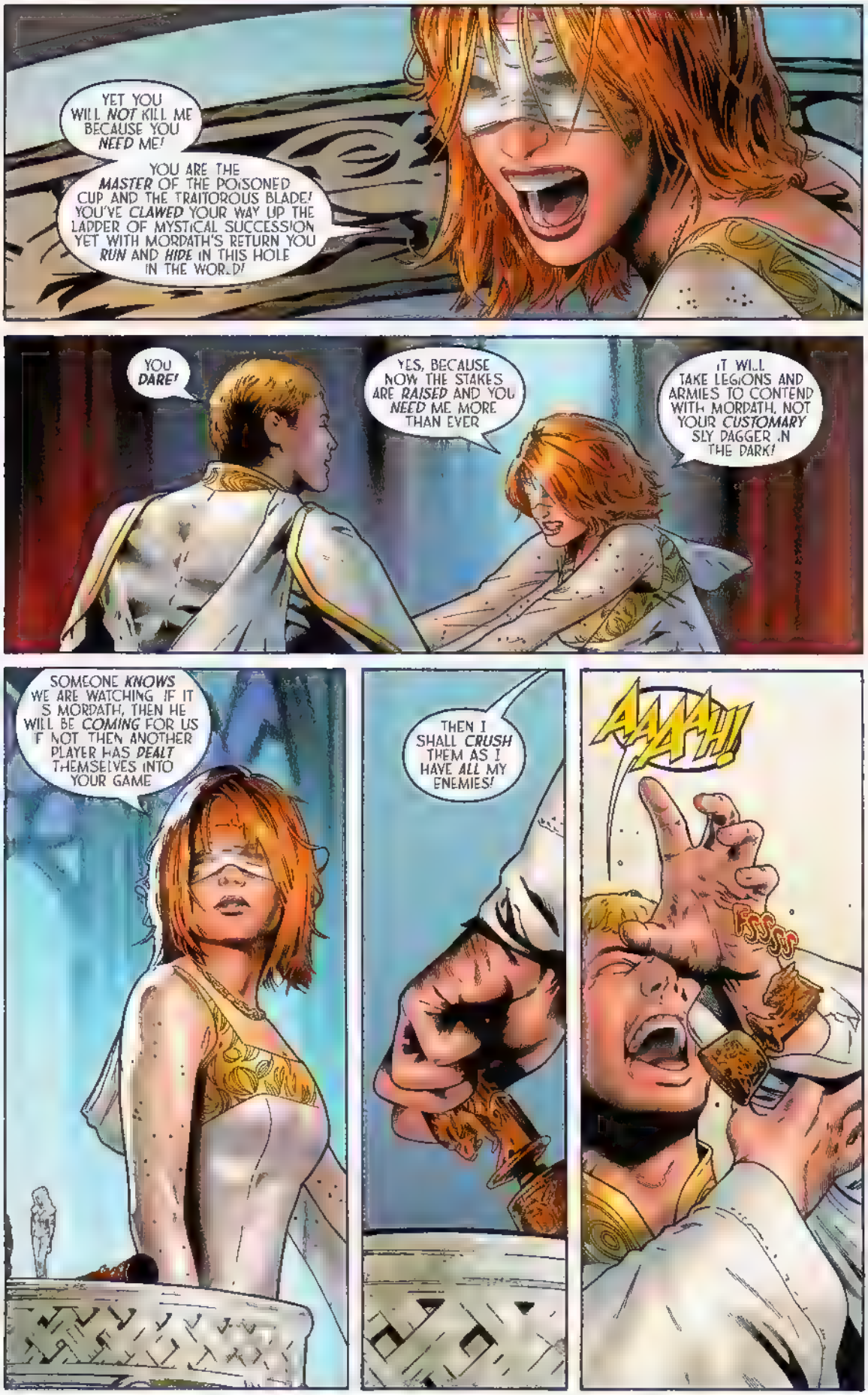
ROAAGH!!
ENOUGH!

BLADE

ARWYN?
ARWYN!
I
I'M FINE
I'M OKAY
I THINK DID
I GET IT?
IS IT
DEAD?
I
CANNOT
TEL

WHAT DO YOU *MEAN*? HOW CAN YOU *NOT* KNOW?
IT *DEFIES* MY FORESIGHT I CANNOT SEE WITH ANY *CERTAINTY* WHAT PATH THE *FUTURE* WILL TAKE
FOR ARWYN, YES, YOU'VE SAID SO *BEFORE*
NO FOR *ALL* OF THEM THE WATERS OF FATE HAVE BEEN *MUDDIED* TO PREVENT MY SEEING WHAT WILL BE.
SOMEONE IS AWARE OF OUR HAND IN THIS
MORDATH!
.N PART, YES, BUT THIS IS *NOT* HIS DOING THERE IS *ANOTHER* POWER AT PLAY HERE *ANCIENT* AND WATCHFUL AND *NEWLY* WOKEN


WHY DID YOU NOT SENSE THEM *BEFORE* NOW?
BECAUSE I WAS NOT *ABLE* TO THEY CAST NO FUTURE BEFORE THEM. I COULD ONLY FEEL THEIR PRESENCE BY THE *WAKE* THEIR ACTIONS LEFT BEHIND
YOU SPEAK IN *RIDDLES!*
I SAY ONLY WHAT I SEE. IT IS MY *GIFT* AND MY *CURSE*
NO MY DEAR I AM!
YOU WOULD DO WELL TO *REMEMBER* THAT!
»UHHK«
I HAVE KILLED MIGHTIER MAGES AND SORCERERS THAN *YOU!*


YET YOU WILL *NOT* KILL ME BECAUSE YOU *NEED* ME!
YOU ARE THE *MASTER* OF THE POISONED CUP AND THE TRAITOROUS BLADE! YOU'VE *CLAWED* YOUR WAY UP THE LADDER OF MYSTICAL SUCCESSION YET WITH MORDATH'S RETURN YOU *RUN* AND *HIDE* IN THIS HOLE IN THE WOR.D!
YOU *DARE!*
YES, BECAUSE NOW THE STAKES ARE *RAISED* AND YOU *NEED* ME MORE THAN EVER
.T WI.L TAKE LEGIONS AND ARMIES TO CONTEND WITH MORDATH, NOT YOUR *CUSTOMARY* SLY DAGGER .N THE DARK!
SOMEONE *KNOWS* WE ARE WATCHING .F IT S MORDATH, THEN HE WILL BE *COMING* FOR US F NOT THEN ANOTHER PLAYER HAS *DEALT* THEMSELVES INTO YOUR GAME
THEN I SHALL *CRUSH* THEM AS I HAVE *ALL* MY ENEMIES!
AAAAH!
FSSSS

RRRORRAAGH!
GODS OF SKY AND STONE! IT STILL LIVES!
WHAPP
GHAAAA

IT IT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
TO THE DEATH!! FOR GLORY!
HROAAGH!
COME, FIEND! MY AXE YEARNS TO BITE OUT YOUR LIFE!

FOR MY PEOPLE! FOR MY KIN!

NUGH

LUKHAS, GET UP!

MOVE, DAMN YOU!

SHUNK

LUKHAS!!

HROORAGH!!

THEY'RE NOT EVEN SLOWING IT DOWN!

ARWYN, I THINK IT'S AFTER YOU?

LET IT COME!

GUSTAVUS!
GAAHH!

GHRRR
GUHH

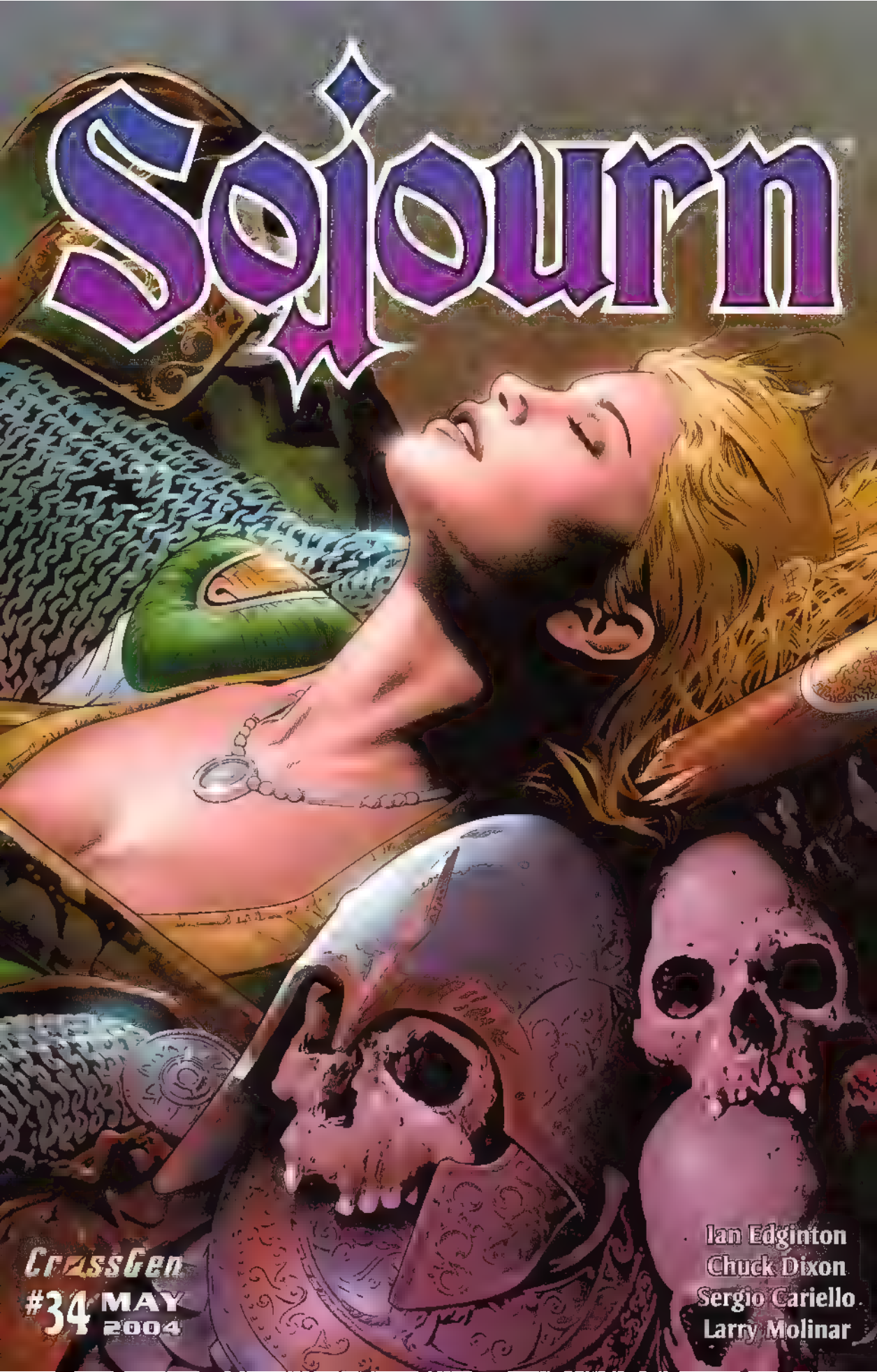
NNNG
HNG
...ARCHER ARCHER TAKE THE SHOT!
IT'S USING THEM AS A SHIELD, SO YOU WON'T USE THE BOW!
FORGET US, WE ARE LOST! FIRE FOR PITY'S SAKE! FIRE!!
ARWYN?
I... I CAN'T
C'MON, CASS, LET'S TRY CUTTING THEM LOOSE
ARWYN, DON'T WAIT FOR US. YOU SEE A SPOT, HIT IT
GO!

HYAAAAAH!
>UFF<
ONE DOWN
GRRH
AAAH!
uhnh

GHRRRRR
LEAVE THAT BE IT'S MINE!!
HARGH!
GNNNN...
TEKK

Hmmm?
Hen aha
HA
HAH HAH HAH!

Sojourn



CrossGen
#34 MAY 2004

Ian Edginton
Chuck Dixon
Sergio Cariello
Larry Molinar

Mordath

Arwyn

Gareth

Cassidy

Previously In Sojourn

More than three centuries ago, the legendary warrior Ayden killed the dread warlord Mordath with a mystical arrow. Before retreating to his valued solitude, Ayden broke the fatal arrow into Five Fragments and scattered them throughout Quin's Five Lands. Should anyone unite the fragments, Ayden vowed, he would return and lend aid.

Now Mordath has risen from his tomb and again conquered the Five Lands. One woman, the archer Arwyn, survived her city's destruction at the hands of Mordath's troll armies. Her husband and daughter did not. Armed with Ayden's magic bow, and joined by the adventurer Gareth and the thief Cassidy, Arwyn has taken up the quest to reunite the Five Fragments and destroy Mordath.

Having captured three of the Fragments, our heroes ventured north to Skarnhime, home of the Ice Trolls known as the Iskani. There, they were attacked by a vengeful beast called The Berserker... who snapped Arwyn's bow. Recovering from the resulting explosion, Gareth proclaimed his true feelings for Cassidy. But their joy was soon shattered. For when the smoke cleared, the bow remained... but Arwyn was nowhere to be found.

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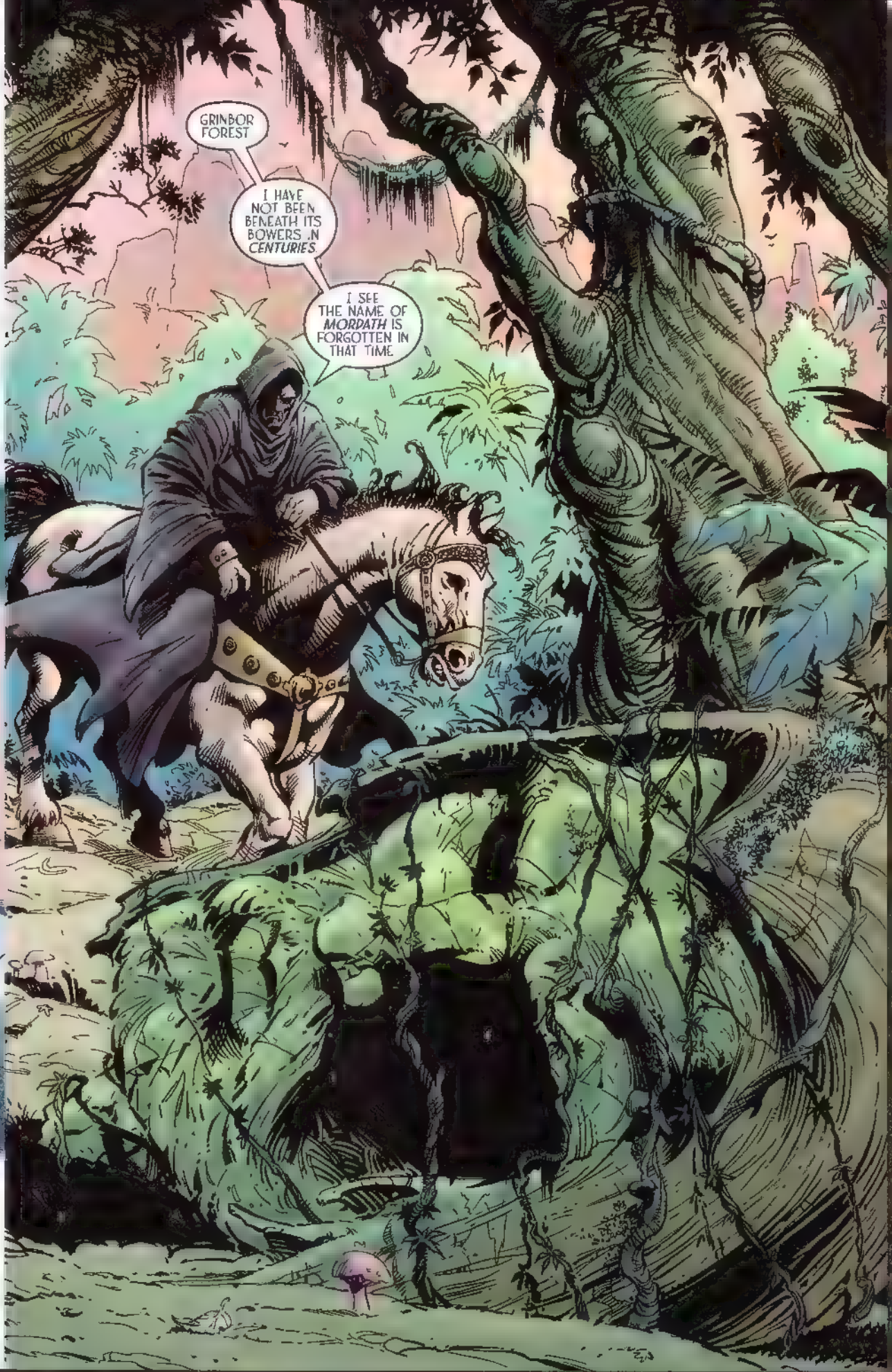
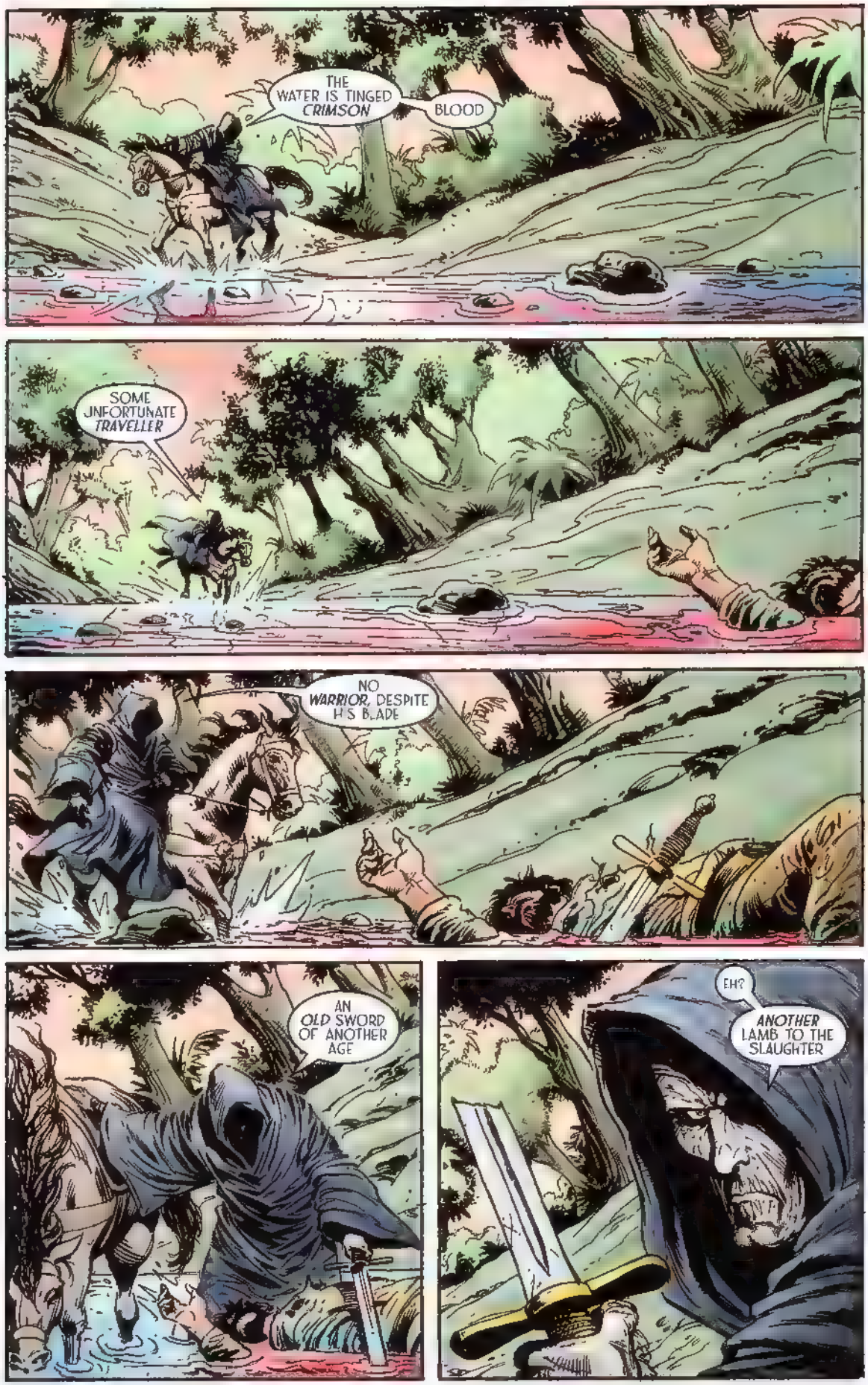

GRINBOR FOREST
I HAVE NOT BEEN BENEATH ITS BOWERS IN *CENTURIES*
I SEE THE NAME OF *MORDATH* IS FORGOTTEN IN THAT TIME

ONCE I RULED HERE UNQUEST ONED AND EVEN LOVED
NOW MY VISAGE LIES IN RUIN
NOW THE FOREST RECLAIMS MY GLORY
IT IS FITTING AS I AM NO LONGER THE MAN I WAS OF OLD
NO LONGER TRULY A MAN
MARTA SAW THIS STATUE ERECTED
IT WAS SHE WHO ORDERED IT RAISED
WHY IS IT, THAT WHEN I AROSE FROM THE DEAD, I DID NOT SEEK HER OUT?
IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THERE IS ONE THAT EVEN MORDATH FEARS?


THE WATER IS TINGED CRIMSON
BLOOD
SOME UNFORTUNATE TRAVELLER
NO WARRIOR, DESPITE HIS BLADE
AN OLD SWORD OF ANOTHER AGE
EH?
ANOTHER LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER

A PRIEST, ROARK
AYE AND A POOR ONE FROM THE LOOK OF THOSE ROBES
BANDITS
THAT WE ARE PRIEST
THESE SOULS ARE PAST SAVING PRIEST
I'D INVOKE YOU TO RIDE ON
BUT THAT'S A STURDY MOUNT YOU'RE RIDING
AND MY COMRADES FANCY A BIT OF HORSEFLESH

IT HAS BEEN SO LONG--
SINCE I HAVE SPILLED BLOOD BY MY OWN HAND
BY BYTH'S UNHOLY EYE
I TRUST THAT WAS NOT YOUR BEST EFFORT, MORTALS.
I WOULD IMAGINE THAT SUCH DANGEROUS MEN WOULD POSE MORE OF A CHALLENGE--
-FOR A SOLITARY PILGRIM

BRING ME HIS HEAD!
=HUNH!=
AHHHH!
=URNH!=
GHUUUK!

GUHH!
UHHH
--HAH!
URRRGH!

FOO.S
DAMNED FOOLS
DEMONS OF DARK DIASMA.
YOU MAY HAVE YOJR MISSILE BACK, ARCHER
UH?

MANY FEITINGS SINCE I HAVE FELT THE STING OF BATTLE
-SMELT THE SOUR COPPER STENCH OF BLOOD IN MY OWN NOSTRILS
YOU HAVE MY GRATITUDE FOR THAT, BANDIT LORD
WHO ARE YOU?
YOU KNOW ME WELL
HUH HUH MORDATH
-UNHH-

SO FULFILLING TO BE REMEMBERED
WAAAA-EWAAAAAA
WHAT IS THAT WAIL?
THE MEWLING OF A CALF? I HAVE HEARD THE SOUND BEFORE
A HUMAN WHELP
WOULD BE A MERCY TO END ITS LIFE
BUT YOU ARE ALONE JUST AS I, ARE YOU NOT?
TWO SOULS ALONE IN AN UNWELCOMING WORLD

"A WORLD THAT DESTROYS ALL OF US IN THE END"
GUH!
I HURT ALL OVER
GATES OF PERDITION

IT'S ALL GONE

CASSIDY?
CASSIDY!
UH?
CASSIDY?
IT'S GARETH!
KEEP TALKING SO I CAN FIND YOU!
DAMN NOW SHE SHUTS UP
UNNH!

GARETH?
WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?
I THOUGHT I LOST YOU.
I CAN'T GO THROUGH THE FEELINGS I JUST HAD EVER AGAIN
I'LL DO ANYTHING TO KEEP YOU SAFE
ANYTHING?

HURRRGH!
I AM FREE!
WHUH -
WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE?
SO, WE WILL ALL LIVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY
BUT WHERE IS THE BEAST?
YOU ANXIOUS FOR A REMATCH, GUSTAVUS?
HE'S DEAD AT LEAST, I HOPE HE'S DEAD
WAIT A MOMENT--
WHERE'S ARWYN?

LOOK FOR HER!
NOTHING HERE
I SMELL SOMETHING
NOT HUMAN
PERHAPS REMAINS OF KVOID
HER BOW
SHE MUST BE UNDER HERE!
HELP ME DIG HER OUT!

NO...
IT CAN'T BE...
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND--
--THE BOW-- BROKEN.
AND NO ARWYN TO BE SEEN.

Things of shadow... things of dread... These are the ways... I earn my bread...
Hide in shadows... Hide in murk... Only Marta knows... Where such things lurk...
DO YOU LIKE MY SONG--
--MORDATH?
I FELT YOU COMING.
FELT YOUR NEED.
WHO THREATENS YOUR HOLD OVER THE FIVE LANDS?

I DO INDEED NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE, MARTA.
I TIRE OF THIS HALF-LIFE. THIS MERE EXISTENCE.
I WANT TO BE RESTORED TO YOUTHFULNESS.
I WANT TO BE THE MORDATH I ONCE WAS.
Heh--heh-- THAT MAY ONLY BE ACCOMPLISHED BY TAKING THE YOUTH OF ANOTHER.
I HAVE ALREADY TAKEN THAT INTO ACCOUNT.
to be continued...?

Art by Greg Land, Matt Ryan & Justin Ponsor